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**TODAY**

On Top Of The News Email:news@arubatoday.com website: www.arubatoday.com Tel:+297 582-7800 Wednesday, December 18, 2013



## TECHNOCRACY AT WORK

President Barack Obama meets with technology executives in the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington, Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2013. From left are, Mark Pincus, founder, Chief Product Officer & Chairman, Zynga; Marissa Mayer, President and CEO, Yahoo!, and Obama. (AP Photo/ Evan Vucci)

## Obama meets with tech CEOs amid NSA concerns

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — President Barack Obama on Tuesday discussed the troubled federal health care website, government surveillance and other issues with executives from Google, Twitter, Apple and several other leading technology companies. The White House says the meeting was focused on the administration's efforts to repair the HealthCare.gov website and reform

government information technology, but National Security Agency surveillance programs also were on the agenda.

Some of the companies represented at the meeting, including Yahoo, Microsoft and Facebook, have urged Obama to curb surveillance programs after the extent of the information the U.S. collects through their systems was revealed.

Several companies are introducing more encryption technology to shield users' data from government spies and other prying eyes.

The White House said afterward that Obama had the opportunity to hear directly from the CEOs as he and his aides study dozens of recommendations on government surveillance programs that a special task force delivered late last

week, and as the White House finalizes its own internal review of these programs. The process is expected to conclude in January.

"The president made clear his belief in an open, free, and innovative Internet and listened to the group's concerns and recommendations, and made clear that we will consider their input as well as the input of other outside stakeholders

as we finalize our review," the White House said. In a statement afterward that was issued through the White House, the technology companies said they appreciated the chance to share their concerns with Obama. They urged him to "move aggressively" on reform. Chief executives from Netflix, Comcast, LinkedIn, Etsy and AT&T also attended the meeting. □

# New Japan security plan focuses on island dispute

**MARI YAMAGUCHI**  
**Associated Press**

**TOKYO (AP)** — Japan on Tuesday approved a plan to increase defense spending by 5 percent over the next five years to purchase its first surveillance drones, more jet fighters and naval destroyers in the face of China's military expansion. The revised five-year defense plan was adopted by the Cabinet along with a new national security

strategy that reflects Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's drive to raise the profile of Japan's military and have the country participate more in international diplomacy and security. Experts say the strategy and defense plan is in line with ongoing global power shifts, but Japan's neighbors — and some Japanese citizens — worry the new strategies push the country away from its pac-

ifist constitution adopted after World War II.

"Many people worry inside Japan and outside that maybe Abe hasn't really learned the lesson from the wartime history of Japan and that there's a danger that a greater role played by Japan actually means the rise of militarism in the long term," said Koichi Nakano, an international politics professor at Sophia University in Tokyo.

Yousuke Isozaki, a ruling party lawmaker who is a special adviser to Abe on security affairs, described the new strategy as progress toward Japan becoming a more "normal" country. He said that while Japan should preserve the principle of pacifism enshrined in its constitution, the country has been too biased in that direction. "We are only trying to shift closer to a normal country,"

and we have no intention whatsoever to become a military power," Isozaki said. "Peace policy is Japan's most important value, and I think we should keep that. But parts that have been too restrictive should be modified so that Japan can make international contributions. But again, we are not thinking about matching what America and Britain are doing." The previous five-year defense plan adopted in 2010 by the now-opposition Democratic Party of Japan cut military spending by 750 billion yen, or 3 percent. The latest plans reflect a shift in Japan's defense priorities from its northern reaches to the East China Sea, where Tokyo and Beijing dispute each other's claim to some uninhabited islands. They call for setting up an amphibious unit similar to the U.S. Marines to respond quickly to a possible foreign invasion of those islands. Japan will also deploy an early warning system, submarines and anti-missile defenses in the area. From 2014-2019, Japan plans to buy three drones, as well as 28 F-35A fighters, 17 Osprey aircraft and five destroyers, including two with Aegis anti-ballistic-missile systems. The purchases will cost 24.7 trillion yen (\$247 billion), up 5 percent from the previous plan. Broader defense program guidelines also adopted Tuesday say Japan is "gravely concerned" about China's growing maritime and military presence in the East China Sea, and its lack of transparency and "high-handed" approach. Late last month, China said all aircraft entering a vast zone over the East China Sea must identify themselves and follow Chinese instructions. While Japan's alliance with the U.S. remains the cornerstone of its defense, Japan also should seek increased security cooperation with South Korea, Australia, Southeast Asia and India, the guidelines say. "Up until now, Japan focused too much on the Japan-U.S. security alliance," Isozaki said. "I don't think that alone is enough to protect the peace in this region." □



Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force's P-3C Orion surveillance plane flies over the disputed islands in the East China Sea, called the Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China. Japan on Tuesday Dec. 17, 2013, approved a plan to increase defense spending by 5 percent over the next five years to purchase its first surveillance drones, more jet fighters and naval destroyers in the face of China's military expansion. (AP Photo/Kyodo News)

# US blacklists Myanmar firms for arms trade

**M. PENNINGTON**  
**Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The United States imposed sanctions Tuesday on a Myanmar military officer and three companies it accuses of involvement in the continuing, illicit arms trade with North Korea.

The designations do not directly target Myanmar's government but will deepen doubts over the nation's compliance with U.N. Security Council resolutions. Cutting Myanmar's military ties with North Korea has been a key goal of the U.S. policy to end Myanmar's long international isolation after its democratic reforms.

In response to the reforms

in the country also known as Burma, Washington has eased its longstanding restrictions on trade and investment, although not on export of arms. In a sign of enduring U.S. concerns, Treasury has periodically expanded the blacklist of individuals and companies it considers to be bad actors.

As of Tuesday, they include Lt. Col. Kyaw Nyunt Oo, said to act on behalf of the Burmese Directorate of Defense Industries, or DDI, which is already sanctioned. Its chief, a general, was blacklisted in July. Treasury also targeted Soe Min Htike Co. Ltd. and Excellence Mineral, describing them in Tuesday's state-

ment as Myanmar companies working with North Korean officials to import materiel for military weapons programs as recently this June; and Asia Metal, said to have constructed buildings and supplied construction materials for a DDI factory compound where approximately 30 North Koreans were still working as of December 2012.

Myanmar's government has said its arms trade with North Korea has stopped and it complies with the U.N. sanctions which are intended to deny Pyongyang revenue for expanding nuclear and ballistic missile programs. U.S. officials say Myanmar has

curtailed the trade, but not ended it

"The revenues from these continuing military sales directly support North Korea's illicit activities," Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen said in a statement. "We will continue to target this activity in Burma, and the region, as we work with our international partners to shut down North Korea's dangerous and destabilizing weapons proliferation."

Designation of a company or individual on the Treasury list prohibits U.S. persons from transactions with them, and freezes any assets they may have subject to U.S. jurisdiction.□

## Cantor Fitzgerald declares \$135M 9/11 settlement

**LARRY NEUMEISTER**  
Associated Press

**NEW YORK (AP)**—Financial services firm Cantor Fitzgerald, which lost nearly two-thirds of its employees in the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, on Tuesday announced a \$135 million settlement with American Airlines and insurance carriers.

U.S. District Judge Alvin K. Hellerstein said the deal will end the final airplane-focused case resulting from claims of wrongful death and personal injuries.

The agreement averts a trial scheduled for next month, which means there will be no airing of such questions as how terrorists got through security, the best way to stop terrorists, whether there was really wrongdoing and negligence and how best to preserve liberties amid such threats, Hellerstein said.

"All this will remain a mystery," he said.

Calling the settlement a significant conclusion after 12 years of litigation that resulted in scores of settlements and not a single trial involving airlines, the judge said, "Hopefully what was achieved was a measure of justice, a measure of reparation and closure."

He added, "But the lives that were lost were irreparable and being irreparable, there now are no words to describe that loss."

The deal was announced by Cantor Fitzgerald attorney John Stoviak, who said money from various insurers is already in escrow and ready to be paid out pending formal approval by the court at or after a Jan. 13 hearing.

Afterward, Cantor Fitzgerald Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Howard W. Lutnick said in a statement that the case for insurance companies "was just another case, just another settlement, but not for us."

Lutnick, whose brother Gary was killed in the attacks, added: "We could never." □

## More snow, frigid temps take aim at Northeast

**RIK STEVENS**  
Associated Press

**CONCORD, N.H. (AP)**—More snow and frigid temperatures trudged into the Northeast on Tuesday even as crews continued to clean up from a weekend storm.

The latest storm made its way into New England late Tuesday morning and tracked northeastward. Parts of Maine could see upward of 9 inches by the time it pushed off the coast Wednesday afternoon, according to National Weather

Service meteorologist Tom Hawley in Gray, Maine. Most of the region will see 3 to 6 inches of snow.

"My feeling is it's wonderful," Tony Hartigan said as he walked quickly across Main Street in Concord, N.H. He wore no hat or gloves despite the bank thermometer over his shoulder that blinked 3 degrees. "It packs the ski resorts, it's pretty for Christmas and I spent last week in Florida so I didn't see it!"

Commuters found a sluggish commute home Tues-

day evening and police reported cars sliding off snow-covered roads. Airports reported delays of an hour to more than 2 1/2 hours because of snow and ice, according to the website FlightAware.

Before the storm's arrival, the region woke up to frigid cold. Temperatures were below zero in many places — including minus-27 in Berlin, N.H., and Saranac Lake, N.Y., — and 10 to 15 degrees below normal for this time of year. Temperatures will start to rise as the

weekend approaches and could hit 60 in Boston by Sunday, Hawley said.

In Lewiston and Auburn, Maine, the extreme cold temporarily shut down the bus system after sub-zero temperatures froze air lines that run hydraulic and steering systems.

It was so cold in Maine that power cables snapped in at least two locations, leaving about 950 homes and businesses without electricity and heat for a couple of hours in subzero temperatures. □



A lone runner traverses the bike and running path along Lake Michigan at the North Avenue beach as temperatures hover around freezing Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2013, in Chicago.

(AP Photo/Charles Rex Arbogast)

## Sheriff: School gunman planned to attack 5 spots

**CENTENNIAL, Colorado (AP)**—The student who opened fire at his suburban high school last week apparently planned to attack at least five different areas, investigators said Tuesday. Letters and numbers corresponding to the locations of the Arapahoe High School library and four adjacent classrooms were written in indelible marker on Karl Pierson's arm, and investigators believed he planned to target those spots, Arapahoe County Sheriff Grayson Robinson said in a statement.

Investigators were trying to determine if the occupants of those rooms may have

been personally targeted by Pierson.

Robinson has previously said that investigators believed a librarian who headed the school's speech and debate team was Pierson's intended target Friday, but he also planned to harm many others. The librarian escaped, but Pierson critically wounded a 17-year-old senior, Claire Davis, whom he encountered soon after entering the school armed with a 12-gauge pump-action shotgun, a machete and three Molotov cocktails.

Davis was sitting with a friend near the school li-



This Sept. 7, 2013 photo shows Arapahoe High School senior Karl Pierson as he poses for his class picture in Centennial, Colo.

(AP Photo/Mary McGregor)

brary when Pierson shot her in the head point-blank. She remains in a coma.

Pierson ended up killing himself in the library with his sixth and final shot 80 seconds after entering the school, as a school resource officer was closing in.

Robinson also gave more details Tuesday about the amount and type of ammunition Pierson carried — more than 125 rounds of steel-shot, buckshot and slug ammunition.

Also written on Pierson's arm was the Latin phrase "Alea iacta est," which translates to "The die has been cast." □



Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nev. takes a break from the Senate floor, on Capitol Hill in Washington, Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2013, after a bipartisan budget compromise that ensures the measure will pass the Democratic-led chamber no later than Wednesday.

(AP Photo/J. Applewhite)

## Budget bill moves toward final passage in the Senate

ANDREW TAYLOR

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — A bill that would avert another government shutdown and ease many of the painful budget cuts passed a pivotal test in the Senate on Tuesday, a rare example of bipartisanship in a deeply divided Congress.

The measure should stabilize a broken budget process after a partial government shutdown in October that inflicted political harm upon Republicans and Congress in general.

"This bipartisan bill takes the first steps toward rebuilding our broken budget process. And hopefully, toward rebuilding our broken Congress," said Budget Committee Chairman Patty Murray, who negotiated the measure with House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan, the Republican vice presidential nominee last year. "The bill would ease some of the harshest cuts to agency budgets required under automatic spending curbs imposed earlier this year after Democrats and Republicans failed to reach a budget agreement. The cuts had been intended to be so onerous that they would force Washington to reach a lasting deal on

government spending. But that so-called grand bargain was never reached. The Senate advanced the measure on a 67-33 vote that ensures it will pass the Democratic-led chamber no later than Wednesday and head to the White House to be signed into law.

Twelve Republicans voted with Democrats to advance the measure over a 60-vote filibuster threshold demanded by Republican leaders.

Most Senate Republicans opposed the legislation despite the sweeping Republican support it enjoyed in the House last week. The top Senate Republican, Mitch McConnell, opposed the measure. He is embroiled in a primary with a challenger from the low tax, small government, tea party movement. Nobody is claiming the pact worked out between the Ryan and Murray is perfect. It eases \$63 billion in scheduled spending cuts over the next two years and replaces them with longer-term savings measured over 10 years, many of which don't accumulate until 2022-23. Deficits would increase by \$23.2 billion in 2014 and by \$18.2 billion the year after that. □

## US senator offers to go to Iran for CIA contractor

DONNA CASSATA

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Sen. Bill Nelson said Tuesday he is willing to travel to Iran if it would help find missing CIA contractor Robert Levinson who disappeared while on a secret intelligence mission to Iran.

In a speech on the Senate floor, Nelson said he has spoken in recent days to Mohammad Khazaee, the Iranian ambassador to the United Nations, and pleaded on humanitarian grounds for details on Levinson, who disappeared in Iran in 2007.

An Associated Press in-

vestigation published last week found that Levinson was working for the CIA — investigating the Iranian government. The U.S. long has publicly described Levinson as a private citizen who traveled to an Iranian island on private business.

Nelson, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said he has offered to the ambassador "if it would in any way help that I am willing to go to Iran, if in any way that it would secure his release. If the Iranian authorities took him, somebody in the government of Iran knows of his whereabouts." □



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## AP survey:

## US income gap holding back broader economy

CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER  
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The growing gap between the richest Americans and everyone else isn't bad just for individuals. It's hurting the U.S. economy. So says a majority of more

But analysts say the economy would be better able to sustain its growth if the riches were more evenly dispersed. For one thing, a plunge in stock prices typically leads wealthier Americans to cut sharply back on their spending. "The broader the improve-

ing Wednesday.

Three-quarters of the economists surveyed don't think the Fed is ready to announce a pullback in its economic stimulus. Speculation has been rising that the Fed will soon scale back its \$85 billion in monthly bond purchases because of the economy's steady gains. The bond purchases have been intended to keep long-term loan rates low to induce people to borrow and spend.

Among the majority of economists who think the Fed will maintain its pace of bond buying for now, the largest group think a pullback will begin at its next meeting in late January.

Most of the economists

don't think the economy needs the Fed's help. Just over half say they believe growth could reach a healthy 3 percent annual pace even without the Fed's bond buying. Several predicted that U.S. economic growth will pick up as the effects of tax increases and government spending cuts that kicked in this year dwindle.

As Janet Yellen prepares to succeed Ben Bernanke as chairman early next year, most of the economists expect the Fed to become more "dovish" — that is, more focused on fighting unemployment than on worrying about higher inflation that might result from the Fed's actions. The Senate could confirm Yellen as soon as this week. □



A homeless man pushes a shopping cart full of his belongings across an intersection in the Skid Row area of Los Angeles. The growing gap between the richest Americans and everyone else isn't bad just for individuals, it's hurting the U.S. economy.

(AP Photo/Jae C. Hon)

than three dozen economists surveyed last week by The Associated Press. Their concerns tap into a debate that's intensified as middle-class pay has stagnated while wealthier households have thrived. A key source of the economists' concern: Higher pay and outsize stock market gains are flowing mainly to affluent Americans. Yet these households spend less of their money than do low- and middle-income consumers who make up most of the population but whose pay is barely rising. "What you want is a broader spending base," said Scott Brown, chief economist at Raymond James, a financial advisory firm. "You want more people spending money."

Spending by wealthier Americans, given the weight of their dollars, does help drive the economy.

ment, the more likely it will be sustained," said Michael Niemira, chief economist at the International Council of Shopping Centers. Income inequality has steadily worsened in recent decades, according to government data and academic studies. The most recent census figures show that the average income for the wealthiest 5 percent of U.S. households, adjusted for inflation, has surged 17 percent in the past 20 years. By contrast, average income for the middle 20 percent of households has risen less than 5 percent.

The AP survey collected the views of private, corporate and academic economists on a range of issues. Among the topics were what policy decisions, if any, the Federal Reserve might announce after it ends a policy meet-

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## US doomsday minister Harold Camping dead at 92



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### OAKLAND, California (AP)

— Harold Camping, the U.S. preacher who used his evangelical radio ministry and thousands of billboards to broadcast the end of the world and then gave up public prophecy when his date-specific doomsdays did not come to pass, has died at age 92. Camping, a retired civil engineer who built a worldwide following for the non-profit Oakland, California-based ministry he founded in 1958, died at his home Sunday, said Family Radio Network marketing manager Nina Romero. She said he had been hospitalized after falling.

Camping's most widely spread prediction was that the Rapture would happen on May 21, 2011. His independent Christian media empire spent millions of dollars — some of it from donations made by followers who quit their jobs and sold all their possessions — to spread the word on more than 5,000 billboards and 20 RVs plastered with the Judgment Day message.

When the Judgment Day he foresaw did not materialize, the preacher revised his prophecy, saying he had been off by five months. The preacher, who suffered a stroke three weeks after the May prediction failed, said the light dawned on him that instead of the biblical Rapture in which the faithful would be swept up to the heavens, the date had instead been a "spiritual" Judgment Day, which placed the entire world under Christ's judgment. But after the cataclysmic event did not occur in October either, Camping acknowledged his apocalyptic prophecy had been wrong and posted a letter on his ministry's site telling

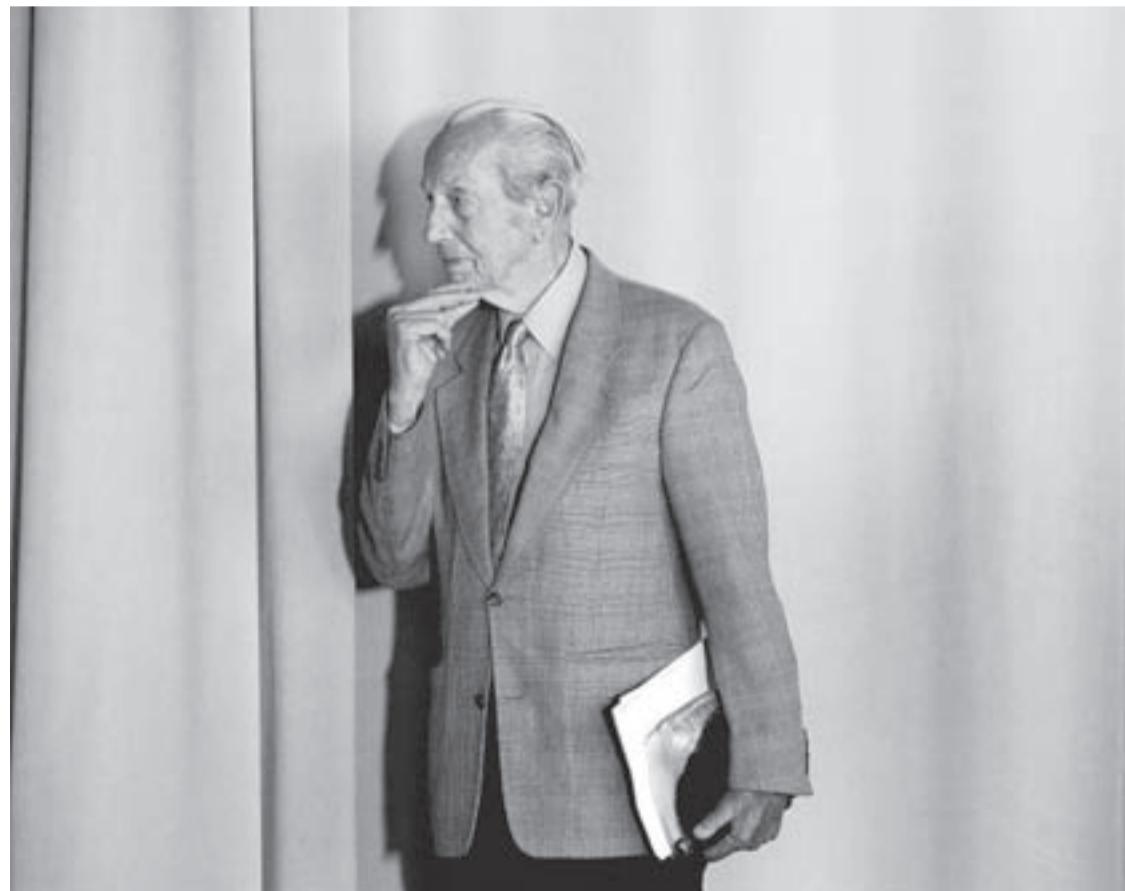
his followers he had no evidence the world would end anytime soon, and wasn't interested in considering future dates.

"We realize that many people are hoping they will know the date of Christ's return," Camping wrote in March 2012. "We humbly acknowledge we were wrong about the timing."

associates said.

He formed his Family Stations ministry in 1958 and eventually sold his business to become the group's president and general manager as a full-time volunteer. In 1961, Camping began hosting the Open Forum program, which was broadcast in 30 languages online and on a network of more than 140 domes-

church age," a time when human beings in Christian churches could be saved. After his billboards warning of pending doom popped up across the country in 2010 and 2011, Christian leaders from across the spectrum widely dismissed his prophecies while atheists and revelers poked fun at his prediction. Some also criticized Camping's



**In this Monday, May 23, 2011 file photo, Harold Camping prepares for a taping of his show "Open Forum" in Oakland, Calif. Camping, who used his evangelical radio ministry and thousands of billboards to broadcast the end of the world and then gave up public prophecy when his date-specific doomsdays did not come to pass, has died at age 92. Camping died at his home Sunday, Dec. 15, 2013 according to Family Radio Network marketing manager Nina Romero. She said he had been hospitalized after falling.**

(AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez)

Camping graduated from the University of California, Berkeley in 1942 and started a construction business shortly after the end of World War II, according to his nonprofit's website.

For decades, Camping and his family attended the Christian Reformed Church, where he served as an elder and Bible teacher, but he left the church in 1988 when he felt it no longer faithfully represented biblical teachings,

tic and international radio stations owned by Family Stations.

Each weeknight, Camping would transmit his own biblical interpretations in a quivery monotone, clutching a worn Bible as he took listeners' calls. He first predicted the world would end on Sept. 6, 1994 and when it did not, Camping said it was off because of a mathematical error. Followers later said he was referring to the end of "the

use of millions of dollars in followers' donations to advertise Judgment Day.

Camping also offered a measured apology, adding that he felt so terrible when his prophecy did not come true that he left home and took refuge in a motel with his wife.

Camping wrote about 30 books and booklets over the years. Family Radio Network said in its statement that he is survived by a wife of 71 years. □

US Financial Front:

# American consumer prices flat as gas costs dip

JOSH BOAK

AP Economics Writer

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — U.S. consumer prices stayed flat in November, held down by falling gas prices. Inflation remains low across the broader economy, giving the Federal Reserve latitude to continue its extraordinary stimulus program.

The consumer price index was unchanged last month, after dropping 0.1 percent in October, the Labor Department said Tuesday.

Gas prices declined 1.6 percent in November to keep overall prices down. Over the past 12 months, consumer prices have risen just 1.2 percent. That's well below the Fed's 2 percent inflation target.

Excluding volatile energy and food costs, core prices rose 0.2 percent in November from October and just 1.7 percent over the past

12 months.

High unemployment and small wage increases have kept consumers from ramping up spending, making it difficult for businesses to raise prices since the Great Recession ended.

Low inflation also gives Fed members more reason to hold off scaling back its buying \$85 billion a month in bond purchases for a few more months. The Fed's final two-day policy meeting starts Tuesday and many economists expect the Fed to keep the purchases at that level.

"Indeed, inflation is still a distance from the Fed's 2 percent target and this is one report that would give the Fed reason to go easy on tapering," said Jennifer Lee, senior economist at BMO Capital Markets. Cheaper gasoline costs in recent months have kept inflation extremely weak. Gas prices nationwide are

averaging just \$3.23 a gallon (85 cents a liter), according to AAA's Daily Fuel Gauge Report.

The November decline in energy costs was offset by higher prices for home rentals, hotels, airfare, and restaurant meals. Grocery prices edged up 0.1 percent last month, led by higher prices for bread, hot dogs, soup and milk.

Prices for new vehicles and clothing fell. But in a sign of potentially changing fashion styles, the price of women's dresses increased 5.7 percent during the past 12 months as the cost of women's suits dropped.

For roughly a year, the Fed has been buying Treasury and mortgage bonds to keep long-term interest rates low and encourage more borrowing and spending. The Fed has also kept its key short-term interest rate near zero since

late 2008.

Critics of the bond-buying program fear it will spark higher inflation in the future.

A small amount of inflation can be good for the economy, because it encourages consumers and businesses to spend and invest



**Watches are on display at a Kmart in New York. The government reported flat consumer prices for November on Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2013.**

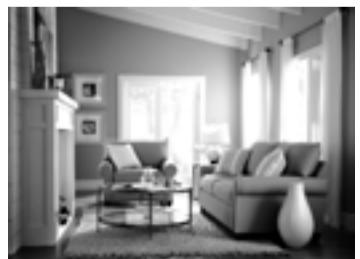
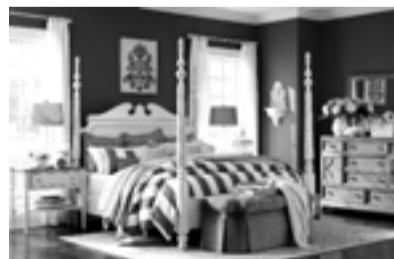
**(AP Photo/Julio Cortez)**  
before prices rise further. But if prices don't increase at all, consumers might pull back their spending on the expectation that goods will be cheaper in the future. □

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## Bomb explodes near Hezbollah base in Lebanon

**BILAL HUSSEIN**  
**ZEINA KARAM**

Associated Press

**BAALBEK, Lebanon (AP)**

— A car bomb packed with explosives detonated near a Hezbollah base in eastern Lebanon Tuesday causing several casualties, officials said, the latest in a wave of deadly attacks that have targeted the Shiite militant group's interests in Lebanon.

However, there were conflicting reports on the source of the pre-dawn explosion and the number of casualties resulting from the blast in the remote, scarcely inhabited area was not immediately clear. Hezbollah agents cleared the open field around the area and sealed it off for hours following the blast, making it difficult to establish what had happened. Hours after the attack, at least four badly damaged vehicles, including the charred, twisted wreckage of an overturned jeep, lay strewn across the rocky field, where spots of blood mixed with patches of snow. It was the first such attack against a Hezbollah outpost in eastern Lebanon's Bekaa region, following a spate of bombings that targeted Hezbollah strongholds south of the Lebanese capital.

Later Tuesday, three rockets hit just outside the northeastern region of Hermel, also a Hezbollah stronghold, without causing any damage, residents said.

The bombing appeared to be related to a series of reprisal attacks over Hezbollah's role in the civil war in neighboring Syria, where members of the group are fighting alongside President Bashar Assad's troops. □

## Russia offers Ukraine \$15B financial lifeline

**David M. Herszenhorn**

**Andrew E. Kramer**

© 2013 New York Times

**MOSCOW** — Playing a trump card in his diplomatic contest with the West over

ing \$15 billion in loans and a sharp discount on natural gas prices.

It was a bold and risky move by Russia, given the political chaos in Ukraine,

moment, however, Putin seemed to gain the upper hand over Europe and the United States in their contest for influence.

There was no discussion



Pro-European Union activists wave flags during a rally in Independence Square in Kiev, Ukraine, Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2013. Weeks of angry pro-European Union protests as well as Western pressure have forced Yanukovych to make some concessions to the opposition. Russian President Vladimir Putin upped the stakes Tuesday in the battle over Ukraine's future, saying Moscow will buy \$15 billion worth of Ukrainian government bonds and sharply cut the price of natural gas heading to its economically struggling neighbor. (AP Photo/Efrem Lukatsky)

Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday that Russia would come to the rescue of its financially troubled neighbor, provid-

where thousands of anti-government protesters remain encamped in Independence Square in Kiev, the capital. For the

of what Russia might receive in return for its assistance. Protesters in Kiev have been deeply worried that President Viktor Ya-

nukovych would cut a secret deal to join a customs union that Russia has established with Belarus and Kazakhstan. That would largely preclude any possibility of reviving the accords with Europe, but Putin said the subject had not come up.

In Independence Square, where the large crowd was bolstered by people coming out of work, the initial reaction appeared to be a mix of fury and dismay, with people chanting, "Out with the crook!"

Leaders of the three opposition parties who are co-ordinating the protest said the demonstrations would continue. They also voiced suspicions about what Yanukovych had offered in exchange for a Russian bailout. "Free cheese is only found in a mousetrap," Arseniy P. Yatsenyuk, the leader of the Fatherland coalition in Parliament, said in a speech. He asked for the patience of protesters — a tired and haggard lot now after 17 days of occupying the square, with a tent encampment and fires burning in barrels to keep people warm. □

## 6 US soldiers killed in Afghanistan copter crash

**AZAM AHMED**

**THOM SHANKER**

© 2013 New York Times

**KABUL, Afghanistan** — Six American soldiers died Tuesday when their helicopter crashed in a remote area of southern Afghanistan, in the single largest loss of life for foreign troops in nearly six months, international coalition officials said. At least one survivor was rescued from the scene by a quick reaction force of U.S. and Afghan soldiers, according to military officials, who also said that militants had

been reported to be moving toward the site shortly after the crash. But it was unclear whether there had been a firefight, and officials said they were investigating whether any of those killed in the incident had survived the crash but died from militant gunfire. A Taliban spokesman said militants had shot down the helicopter, a U.S. Black Hawk transport. But military and local Afghan officials said that initial reports indicated that a mechanical failure was a factor. Afghan officials said the

crash happened around 4 p.m. in the Shajoe district of Zabul province, a mountainous area roughly 50 miles from the capital.

"The area is not fully safe — there is enemy movement there, and it is also surrounded by mountains and covered with forest," said Ghulam Jilani Khan, provincial security chief for Zabul, which shares a border with Pakistan. "The information we have so far is that it crashed because of technical problems." The last such major loss to coalition forces happened in

June, when a truck bomb exploded near a military base in northern Helmand, claiming the lives of seven Georgian soldiers. Throughout the war, bad weather and technical problems have been the most frequent causes of helicopter crashes, despite Taliban claims of responsibility in many of them. In March of this year, five U.S. soldiers were killed when their helicopter crashed in Kandahar. A month later, another crash claimed the lives of two more U.S. soldiers, this time in Nangarhar. □



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## Pope shares his birthday breakfast with homeless

FRANCES D'EMILIO

Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) —

Three homeless men, one of them carrying his dog, helped Pope Francis celebrate his 77th birthday Tuesday, joining him for Mass and breakfast and presenting him with a bouquet of sunflowers.

The men live on the street in the Rome neighborhood just outside the Vatican's walls and were invited by the Holy See official in charge of alms-giving to attend the Mass, which Francis celebrates daily at the hotel where he lives on Vatican City grounds.

The Vatican said Francis also invited his household help to join him in a "family-like" atmosphere, and he spoke of them one by one during his homily.

Francis, who is making history as one of the more informal and down-to-earth popes, struck a modest note as he reflected on people's roles in the world. "Let the Lord write our history," he said in his homily. After Mass, all ate break-

fast with Francis at the hotel dining room.

The Vatican, which initially said four homeless people joined Francis, later clarified that three men had taken part, all from Eastern Europe: the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. The Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano reported that they were asked: "Would you like to come to Pope Francis' birthday party?" and that the surprise guests brought a bouquet of sunflowers to offer the pope. Francis had already blown out the candles on his birthday cake, presented to him on Saturday by children at the Vatican. But another present awaits him: A delegation from his favorite Argentine soccer team, San Lorenzo, will give him a replica of their championship trophy. Vatican officials said no fixed time was set for the papal meeting with officials and at least one player from the team, which clinched the Argentine championship on Sunday. □



Pope Francis, right, is flanked by Vatican Almoner Archbishop Konrad Krajewski as he welcomes four men at the Vatican, Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2013. Four homeless people, one of them bringing his dog, helped Pope Francis celebrate his 77th birthday at the Vatican Tuesday.

(AP Photo/L'Osservatore Romano)

## Iranian official says final nuclear deal is possible

NASSER KARIMI

Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — A top

adviser to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has final say on all matters in Iran, including the country's nuclear policies. Iran last week pulled out of the talks in Vienna to protest the U.S. move. It had reached an interim deal with world powers in Geneva last month. "Continuation of the talks and loyalty to the Geneva deal is Iran's policy," Velayati was quoted as saying. He said the U.S. decision on extending the sanctions on more Iranian companies had prompted international outcry, citing Russia in particular. □

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# Germany's Merkel starts 3rd term with new allies

GEIR MOULSON  
Associated Press

**BERLIN (AP)** — Angela Merkel has won over Germans once again.

The 59-year-old, no-drama leader has weathered turbulent economic times, firmly establishing Germany as Europe's financial taskmaster while preserving its welfare comforts and status as a reluctant world power.

Since entering politics in her mid-30s after a career as a physicist, Merkel has earned a reputation as an effective operator on the international stage, warming ties with the U.S. that had been frayed by German opposition to the Iraq war and brokering compromises among fractious European Union leaders.

She has already achieved a number of firsts: the first German chancellor from the former communist east and the first woman to lead the country.

"It is said of her that she doesn't specify what is at the end of the journey, but she governs with a steady hand," Lothar Probst, a political scientist at the

University of Bremen, told Phoenix television. "People clearly like that. They have confidence in her and she is unpretentious."

cal change or charismatic leaders after the turmoil of the 20th century, which saw Germany defeated in two World Wars and

approach, nudging her conservatives toward the center on issues such as an end to military conscription and her decision to phase

Joachim Sauer, live quietly in a Berlin apartment without the trappings of the White House or Britain's No. 10 Downing Street.

Merkel returns to the chancellery as Europe is still struggling from debt-fueled recession. Germany's relations with its chief ally, the United States, are strained over reports that the American spy agency monitored her cellphone and collected electronic information from ordinary Germans, a practice that harkens back to dictatorial rule by the Nazis and East German communists.

But those great issues have taken a backseat in the wake of her re-election.

Instead, Merkel says her new government's priorities will be "solid finances, secure prosperity and social security" — with a mixture of center-left priorities such as a new national minimum wage, a pledge not to raise taxes and another to stop running up new debt.

"Together, we want to make sure that people in Germany are doing even better in 2017 than today," she said.

Merkel has managed to lead Europe's biggest economy through the 2008 financial crisis and now the eurozone debt crisis without inflicting on Germans the kind of painful reforms and spending cuts that other Europeans have had to endure. □



**Peter Altmaier, Head of the Federal Chancellery, Economic Cooperation and Development Minister Gerd Mueller, Transportation and Digital Infrastructure Minister Alexander Dobrindt, Environment Minister Barbara Hendricks, Agriculture Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich, Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen, Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere, Labor Minister Andrea Nahles, Chancellor Angela Merkel, President Joachim Gauck, Economy and Energy Minister Sigmar Gabriel, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Minister of Justice Heiko Maas, Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble, Health Minister Hermann Groehe, Science Minister Johanna Wanka and Family Minister Manuela Schwesig, from left, pose for a group photo after the appointment of the ministers of Germany's new government in Berlin, Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2013.**

(AP Photo/dpa, Maurizio Gambarini)

It's a style has served her well with an electorate that doesn't yearn for radi-

then divided into two rival states.

Merkel was sworn in Tuesday for a third term as chancellor at the head of a "grand coalition" of her conservative Union bloc and the center-left Social Democrats, traditional rivals who together have a huge parliamentary majority.

At home, she has taken a relentlessly pragmatic

our nuclear power after Japan's 2011 Fukushima disaster.

Instead of oratorical flair or talk of a grand vision, Merkel projects a nurturing image of someone who occasionally does her own grocery shopping, enjoys baking and buys clothes off the rack in Berlin department stores. She and her second husband, chemistry professor

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## North Korea projects strength on death anniversary

ERIC TALMADGE

Associated Press

**PYONGYANG, North Korea**

(AP) — North Korea vowed to unite behind leader Kim Jong Un during carefully

of everything from alleged drug abuse to womanizing to trying to create his own powerbase were trumpeted daily in the state media — heightened questions

"Once more, our people's army is firmly determined to guarantee the victory of our great general's revolutionary cause," Choe said, adding that the mili-

tary would "hold high the flag of the party" and follow "the ever-victorious leadership of our supreme commander."

Three minutes of silence were observed at the start of the ceremony.

Jang's wife, Kim Kyong Hui, who is Kim Jong Un's aunt, did not appear at Tuesday's memorial. But she was noted by state media over the weekend in connection with another funeral of a top official, a sign that she has survived Jang's removal.

Contradicting past assertions of unity and strength, North Korea has acknowledged its leadership had indeed been roiled by the challenge by Kim's mentor and uncle after the 2011 death of Kim's father. The acknowledgement of dis-

sension and dangerous instability in the government has raised fears of what's ahead as Kim tries to revive a moribund economy while maintaining and advancing development of the country's nuclear arsenal.

On the eve of the anniversary Monday, tens of thousands of people crowded Mansu Hill in Pyongyang, where two giant bronze statues of national founder Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il stand.

A mass rally of the military was also held outside the mausoleum where the two Kims lie in state to swear allegiance to Kim Jong Un and the ruling Workers' Party.

As the ceremony began Tuesday, Pyongyang's streets were empty. □



North Koreans visit Mansu Hill to pay their respects at the base of statues of the late leaders Kim Il Sung, left, and Kim Jong Il in Pyongyang, North Korea, Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2013, on the second anniversary of the death of Kim Jong Il.

(AP Photo/Kyodo News)

staged events Tuesday to mark the second anniversary of his father's death, in an attempt to show it has returned to business as usual after the purge and execution of his once-powerful uncle last week.

Kim sat silently as a stadium full of military and party officials paid homage to his father, Kim Jong Il, at the day's main event. He was flanked by Kim Yong Nam, the ceremonial head of state, and Vice Marshal Choe Ryong Hae, representing the military. Conspicuously absent was Jang Song Thaek, who was executed after being accused of corruption and trying to overthrow the government.

Jang was widely seen as the second-most powerful man in North Korea before his fall. The regime's decision to execute and publicly vilify him — charges

over the stability of Kim's two-year-old leadership and shattered the North's carefully cultivated illusion of total unity.

But with Jang now out of the picture — he is already being deleted from state media archives — North Korea's official message Tuesday was back to its usual calls for "single-minded unity" behind Kim's leadership.

As top officials sat with Kim on a wide stage at the Pyongyang Indoor Gymnasium for Tuesday's event with a huge portrait of Kim Jong Il behind them, heads bowed as the traditional North Korean funeral dirge played. At several points during the speeches, all rose to applaud the "immortal and glorious exploits" of the late leader. Kim Jong Un, wearing a gray Mao suit, did not speak at the ceremony.

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## Stonehenge monument site gets makeover

JILL LAWLESS  
Associated Press

### STONEHENGE, England

(AP) — After thousands of years, Stonehenge has had a makeover. But visitors may initially feel something is missing: the prehistoric monument itself.

Tourists now arrive at a gleaming new timber-and-glass visitor center some 1.5 miles (2.4 kilometers) from Stonehenge. The famous stone circle tucked into the rolling green landscape is nowhere to be seen.

It's a teasing introduction to the site, where new facilities and landscaping are designed to "restore the dignity" of Stonehenge, and transform the way more than 1 million visitors a year see it.

the old ticket office and other nondescript structures clustered beside the monument. A busy road that ferried thousands of cars a day past the stones is being closed and grassed over.

The idea is to return Stonehenge, 80 miles (130 kilometers) southwest of London, to its rural landscape. Visitors will be bussed to the stones on a special shuttle. Or they can walk, exploring paths and an ancient processional approach route that for years has been cut in half by asphalt.

Even the new visitor building — two single-story blocks, one of glass and one of timber, under an undulating roof — is designed to fit unobtrusively

teeth and handsome features, in a shaggy, prehistoric kind of way.

"The women here at English Heritage are very fond of him," Nilsson said.

All this comes at a price. The 27 million pound (\$44 million) renovation was funded partly through donations and partly by a levy on profits of Britain's national lottery.

The admission charge has almost doubled, from 8 pounds (\$13) to 14.90 pounds (\$24) for an adult. There is the requisite modern cafeteria and a large gift shop, where visitors can buy Stonehenge jam, chocolate, baseball caps, mouse pads and fridge magnets, as well as "Stonehenge Rocks" T-shirts.

Stonehenge, much of which still stands, were brought from up to 175 miles (280 kilometers) away. Construction continued for centuries, and the site may have been a temple for Druid worship, a giant astronomical calendar or a place of healing. Evidence suggests large crowds gathered at Stonehenge for the summer and winter solstices, a tradition that continues today. Thousands of self-styled Druids, pagans and New Age revelers are due to gather for the winter solstice on Saturday, the shortest day of the year in the northern hemisphere. Senior curator Sara Lunt said there are still major discoveries to be made — more than



Visitors take photographs of the world heritage site of Stonehenge, England, Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2013. It has been standing for thousands of years, so Britain's ancient Stonehenge monument was due a makeover. The 27 million pound (\$44 million) renovation which was previewed Tuesday includes a new building 1.5 miles (2.4 kilometers) from the stones where the 1 million a year visitors can watch an exhibition about Neolithic life.

(AP Photo/Alastair Grant)

Simon Thurley, who heads governing body English Heritage, said visitors will now be able to see the stones "free from the clutter and rubbish" that have been built up around them. On Tuesday, journalists and English Heritage members were given a preview of the new center, which houses a 360-degree Cinerama-style "virtual tour" of the monument, along with an extensive exhibition about the Neolithic Britons who built Stonehenge starting 5,000 years ago.

When the building opens to the public on Wednesday, workers will dismantle

into the landscape.

"If people don't remember it when they go home, but they remember the monument, that won't be a bad thing," said architect Stephen Quinlan.

Inside, the exhibition seeks to show the monument's prehistoric creators to be sophisticated people, who raised pigs and hunted, gathered from far and wide for feasts — and built this remarkable, mysterious monument.

The face of one 5,000-year-old local resident has been reconstructed from his skull by Oscar Nilsson, a forensic sculptor. He had good

The commercialism is isolated from the monument, which retains its eternal mystery. Stonehenge was built in three phases between 3000 B.C. and 1600 B.C. Archaeologists agree it was a temple — but to what gods, and exactly how it was used, remains unclear. Recent research suggests the site may have started as a giant burial ground for elite families. Archaeologists have found the remains of dozens of cremated bodies from about 3000 B.C. whose location was marked by bluestones.

Stones for the second

half the site remains unexcavated. But the original purpose of Stonehenge may remain a mystery. "We know there was a big idea" behind Stonehenge and other stone circles built across the British Isles in the Neolithic period, she said. But "what the spiritual dimension of this idea is — that is the key, and that is what we can't get."

"We still have no way of replicating a Neolithic mind. We don't have the Neolithic voice in our ear. "We don't know the heart of it — and that's a good thing. That gives people work to do." □

## Greece landing loan amid central bank warnings

DEREK GATOPoulos  
Associated Press

### ATHENS, Greece (AP)

(AP) — Greece's euro partners agreed Tuesday to hand over a delayed billion euro (\$1.4 billion) payment to the bailed-out country, just as its central bank warned over the economic impact of escalating political tensions.

Jeroen Dijsselbloem, the Dutch Finance Minister who heads the Eurogroup, said Greece had met the major conditions necessary for the latest loan instalment from its bailout package worth 240 billion euros (\$330 billion).

The agreement came at a meeting of eurozone finance officials in Brussels and came despite a recent failure by the Greek government to agree a way ahead with the country's debt inspectors, made up of representatives from the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund.

However, Dijsselbloem said in a statement that he was confident that Greece will "swiftly conclude" discussions with the so-called troika "in order to allow for a completion of the ongoing review of the country's economic adjustment program." Most economic forecasters, including Greece's conservative-led coalition government, think the country will return to growth next year following a savage recession that's wiped out more than a fifth of the Greek economy. The Bank of Greece backed the growth prediction in a report Tuesday, forecasting an expansion of 0.5 percent in 2014.

However, it said a "polarized atmosphere" among political parties could set back years of painful reforms and derail plans to emerge from a severe six-year recession in 2014. It said the infighting could limit the benefits generated from years of austerity that have seen an improvement in Greece's public finances — the country is soon expected to be running a so-called budget surplus, before debt interest payments are taken into account. "A serious problem is emerging with the polarized atmosphere of confrontation in politics, at a time when the opposite is required," the report said. □

# LOCAL Aruba TODAY

## At Paseo Herencia Mall: Shoppers Are Reminded Of The “Reason For The Season”



**PALM BEACH** - Executive management of Paseo Herencia shopping center are certainly pleased by all those that come to shop and stroll their aisles while preparing for the

holidays. They are welcoming many visitors to the mall that come to peruse the shops, dine in their restaurants and enjoy the nearly nightly programs showcasing the regional

culture associated with this festive season.

However, the management also appreciates and wished to share the true spirit of the season, the celebration of the birth of a savior, and so hosted a concert program on Friday evening, December 13 titled “Reason for the Season.” Visitors from the U.S. and Latin America sat side by side and were stirred by the sincere, heartfelt homage performed by “Youth Heart for Jesus” singers and New Life Tabernacle Worship band. A rousing opening number, “Clap Your Hands for Jesus,” had the audience readily joining along in the joyous celebration.

Noted island dancers Kyrantha Maduro and Swesdy Beeldsnijder were also part of the poignant program, a reminder of the spiritual-

ity at the core of Christmas, not to be forgotten by the tinsel and trappings that so often distracts shoppers. “We believe that every aspect of the holiday is fun and exciting,” commented Paseo Herencia Marketing Manager Candy Rasmijn. “However, we should not let the important message of love and peace be lost

in all the frenzy of entertaining and gift shopping. We at the mall are always conscious of our connection to the community, particularly at this time of year. We enjoy providing all these evenings of entertainment, but were thrilled to present this especially lovely message to our patrons.” □



# Aruba Birdlife Conservation's Bird Calendar 2014 now available!

ORANJESTAD - For the sixth consecutive year, Aruba Birdlife Conservation has published its new Aruba Bird Calendar. The Minister of Environment and Nature Affairs, Mike de Meza, as well as the Minister of Education, Michelle Hooijboer-Winklaar, attended the ceremony and assisted in launching the calendar. Many of Aruba's nature lovers also attended the ceremony. Aruba Birdlife Conservation is a foundation which

tries to protect and preserve Aruba's bird wildlife in a broad scope of areas. There are 238 species of birds registered in Aruba and the number is increasing! Two thirds are migratory birds. Aruba is unique in the world in the sense that no less than ten species of terns breed in Aruba. Two endemic sub-species, Aruba's Burrowing Owl (Shoco) and the Brown-throated Parakeet (Prikichi) are decreasing in numbers and need spe-



cial attention. To date, bird wildlife in Aruba is not protected and Aruba Birdlife Conservation is pushing for the required legislation to be ready in 2014. Aruba Birdlife Conserva-

tion is grateful to AIG and Mr. Prakash Gupta and his team for the sponsorship of the calendar. Many tourists take home one or more bird calendars with them every year. The calendars are avail-

able for Afl. 12.50 at the HuchadaBakery at the Certified MegaMall. All funds go to the foundation. Photo shows the moment of launching the new Aruba Bird Calendar 2014. □

## Centrale Bank Van Aruba presents: The State of the Economy

ORANJESTAD - Macroeconomic data for the first half of 2013 show a pick-up in economic activities. On the exports side, tourism continued to provide much-needed support to output expansion, with tourism receipts maintaining a strong performance

(+6.0 percent). Consumption also appears to have strengthened, as the import of goods and the turnover tax receipts of the government surpassed the levels for similar periods a year earlier. However, according to the consumer confidence survey, con-

sumers were less optimistic about the interim future. Investment activities stayed strong although many projects moved into their finalization phase, as evidenced by the large drop in cement imports. In the business perception survey for the first quarter,



businesses likewise signaled prudence in anticipation of the parliamentary elections in September 2013. The average inflation trend continued on a downward trajectory, mirroring particularly the effects of the substantial tariff reductions in water and electricity in, respectively, August and November of 2012. Fiscal deficits (Q1 2013: Afl. 29.5 million) and the economic contraction (with real GDP falling by a cumulative 14.3 percent during 2009-10) contributed to a growing government debt burden, reaching Afl. 3.0 billion at the end of the first quarter of 2013, equivalent to 67.1 percent of GDP (Q1 2012: 2.7 billion, or 58.8 percent of GDP).

The balance of payments posted an Afl. 16.6 million surplus in the first quarter of 2013 (2012: Afl. 62.1 million deficit), generating a net inflow of funds from abroad of the equivalent amount. Mentioned surplus resulted primarily from the increased tourism receipts,

which was offset in part by a deficit on the goods account of the oil sector. Monetary and prudential indicators remained adequate at the end of June. Net foreign assets (including revaluation differences) increased in the first five months of 2013 by Afl. 15.7 million or 1.0 percent to Afl. 1,524.4 million, and continued to be adequate.

Based on currently available information, the CBA forecasts a rebound in economic activity of 2.9 percent in real terms in 2013. For 2014, the expected real GDP growth is 3.4 percent. In terms of prices, the outlook signals a deflation in 2013 (-2.3 percent), reflecting, in addition to the behavior of energy components, limited price pressures from domestic demand. Looking ahead to 2014, the CBA projects moderate inflation at 1.2 percent.

The complete publication is available on our website ([www.cbaruba.org](http://www.cbaruba.org)). Centrale Bank van Aruba □

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## Radisson Associates Enjoy an Elegant Year End Dinner & Dance



**PALM BEACH** – The Radisson associates were invited to the traditional year-end celebration with nothing but fun on the program. With the annual year-end awards scheduled for early January, the party in the Grand Caribbean Ballroom featured an uninterrupted flow of food, drink and dance music with crowd-



pleasers, Claudio Phillips and his band Oreo. The resort's executive committee members were on hand to welcome associates with their guests to the party, and wish them an enjoyable evening. They thanked every associate

personally for their many contributions during 2013, and expressed their anticipation for the year ahead, and all the blessings and challenges it may bring. Pictured here the elegant year end dinner & dance.□



## SPORTS

## Aruba TODAY



## Ravens beat Lions 18-16 on Tucker's 6 field goals

By LARRY LAGE

AP Sports Writer

**DETROIT (AP)** - Justin Tucker's powerful leg kicked the Super Bowl champions into playoff gear.

Tucker made six field goals, including a franchise-record 61-yarder with 38 seconds left that lifted the Baltimore Ravens to an 18-16 win over the Detroit Lions in a Monday night matchup with major postseason implications. Ravens coach John Harbaugh chose to let Tucker try the longest kick of his career - by 5 yards - instead of going for it on fourth-and-8 from the Detroit 43. "If they send me out there, they have reason to," Tucker said. "It's because they think I can make the kick." Rookie safety Matt Elam sealed the victory with an interception - Matthew Stafford's third of the night - after raising eyebrows during the week by calling 28-year-old Calvin Johnson "pretty old" and saying the plan was to make the star receiver uncomfortable by getting physical with him.

Stafford threw a 14-yard touchdown pass to Joseph Fauria with 2:21 left, putting Detroit up 16-15. But the Lions were unable to make a 2-point conversion and couldn't prevent Baltimore (8-6) from setting up



Baltimore Ravens tight end Ed Dickson (84) is upended by Detroit Lions strong safety Glover Quin (27) during the second quarter of an NFL football game in Detroit, Monday, Dec. 16, 2013.

Associated Press

its sensational kicker for his 33rd successful field goal in a row. Tucker's kick went just inside the right upright and barely had enough distance - eight days after Denver's Matt Prater broke the NFL record with a 64-yard field goal.

"I definitely felt like I got a lot of leg into it, but it jumped up so high I thought I might have gotten under it," Tucker said.

Tucker, who hasn't missed a field goal attempt since he was 0 for 2 in Week 2 at Cleveland, has the NFL's longest streak since Matt Stover made 36 in a row for the Ravens from 2005-06, according to STATS.

"What can you say about Justin Tucker?" Harbaugh said. "When we got the ball there, I think at the 45-yard line, I said, 'Hey, are we kicking this?' ... He said, 'I got it.'" He sure did.

Moments after his clutch kick, Tucker mentioned in a television interview that his big night also benefited his fantasy football team.

More importantly, his real club won its fourth straight game and maintained control of an AFC wild card as the Ravens seek their sixth consecutive postseason berth and a chance to defend their Super Bowl title.

Continued on Page 20



Sweden's Henrik Stenson plays a ball on the 1st fairway, on the third day at Sun City South Africa, Saturday, Dec 7, 2013. Stenson is joint 3rd

Associated Press

## Henrik Stenson named European golfer of the year

**LONDON (AP)** — Henrik Stenson has been named European golfer of the year after winning the money title and the U.S. PGA Tour's FedEx Cup.

The 37-year-old Stenson, who succeeded Rory McIlroy,

is the first player from Sweden to win the award.

In addition to his six-shot victory in the season-ending World Tour Championship to clinch the Race to Dubai, Stenson also won the Deutsche Bank Championship and the Tour Championship in Atlanta to seal the FedEx Cup. Another highlight was his third in the U.S. PGA Cham-

pionship. Stenson's most consistent year started at the end of last season, when he won the South African championship.

He said this latest honor reflected "the stellar year I have had. You can call it a dream season, year of my life, whatever you want." □

# Tanaka says he wants to pursue career in MLB

**TOKYO (AP)** — Pitcher Masahiro Tanaka wants to move to Major League Baseball next season but his Japanese team doesn't want to let him go.

MLB and Nippon Professional Baseball have finalized a new posting system that caps the fee for players at \$20 million, much less than what Japanese teams previously got for players like pitchers Yu Darvish and Daisuke Matsuzaka.

"I informed my team that I would like them to allow me to test my abilities in Major League Baseball next season," Tanaka said at a news conference on Tuesday after a meeting with Rakuten Eagles president Yozo Tachibana.

Tanaka, who went 24-0 with a 1.27 ERA with the Eagles during the regular season, is not eligible for free agency and can move to MLB only if the Eagles agree to post him.

The Eagles rejected terms of the new posting system in a vote by Japan's 12 teams on Monday, and say

they want to re-sign Tanaka for next season.

For 30 days from the time a player is posted, any MLB team can attempt to sign the player. It pays the posting fee only if it signs the player.

Under the previous agreement, which began in 1998 and ran through last offseason, there was no cap on bidding and only the MLB team with the highest bid could negotiate with the player.

The Boston Red Sox obtained Matsuzaka from the Seibu Lions before the 2007 season for more than \$51 million, and agreed to a \$52 million, six-year contract. The Texas Rangers got Darvish from the Hokkaido Nippon Ham Fighters before the 2012 season for \$51.7 million and gave him a \$56 million, six-year deal. Darvish finished second in this year's Cy Young Award voting.

The new posting system came about after some MLB teams objected that only the richest clubs could afford to bid on top players. □



this Nov. 3, 2013, file photo, Rakuten Eagles pitcher Masahiro Tanaka pitches against the Yomiuri Giants during Game 7 of baseball's Japan Series in Sendai, northeastern Japan.

Associated Press



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# Pistons hand Pacers first home loss

The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Josh Smith had 30 points, Greg Monroe finished with 13 points and 12 rebounds, and the Detroit Pistons handed Indiana its first home loss Monday night, stunning the Pacers 101-96. The Pistons won for the second time in six games, ending a six-game skid in the series and a nine-game losing streak on the Pacers home court.

Lance Stephenson had a season high 23 points, while Luis Scola scored 13 of his season-best 18 in the fourth quarter for Indiana (20-4), which was 11-0 at home coming into the game. Oklahoma City remains the only NBA team unbeaten at home with a 12-0 record..

Detroit held a 55-40 rebounding edge and out-scored the Pacers in the paint.

Indiana tied the score four times and got as close as 96-94 late in the fourth.

CLIPPERS 115, SPURS 92

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Blake Griffin scored 27 points, hitting 11 of 15 free throws, and Los Angeles cruised past San Antonio 48 hours after completing a seven-game road trip.

Chris Paul added 23 points, eight rebounds and seven



Indiana Pacers center Ian Mahinmi, back, comes from behind to knock the ball away from Detroit Pistons forward Greg Monroe in the first half of an NBA basketball game in Indianapolis, Monday, Dec. 16, 2013.

Associated Press

assists, and Jamal Crawford had 17 points in his second straight start for the Clippers, who repelled several threats in the third quarter to maintain their lead.

Tim Duncan had 17 points and 11 rebounds for the Spurs, whose four-game winning streak ended. Tony Parker limped off the court with a right shin contusion

with 5:09 left in the third. He finished with eight points and six assists in 26 minutes. DeAndre Jordan added 11 rebounds and Griffin had nine to help the Clippers control the boards, 43-36.

NETS 130, 76ERS 94  
NEW YORK (AP) — Joe Johnson made 10 3-pointers, most in the NBA this season, and scored a season-high 37 points to lead

Brooklyn over Philadelphia. Johnson finished 10 for 14 from behind the arc, including 8 of 10 during an incredible third-quarter shooting performance. He passed the nine 3-pointers made this season by Jeremy Lin, who also did it against the 76ers' inept perimeter defense, and Stephen Curry.

Johnson scored 29 points in the third, his most in any quarter in his career.

Deron Williams had 13 points and 13 assists for the Nets, who led by as many as 42 and won for the fourth time in five games while playing without center Brook Lopez.

James Anderson scored 17 points for the 76ers, who lost their seventh straight overall and have dropped 11 in a row on the road since winning at Washington in their road opener.

HAWKS 114, LAKERS 100

ATLANTA (AP) — Kyle Korver sank three 3-pointers in Atlanta's dominant third quarter,

Al Horford scored 19 points to lead the Hawks past cold-shooting Kobe Bryant and Los Angeles.

Paul Millsap had 18 points and Jeff Teague had 17 with 10 assists for the Hawks. Horford grabbed 11 rebounds.

Bryant made only 4 of 14 shots for eight points.

Nick Young led the Lakers with 23 points while making five 3-pointers. Jordan Hill had 21, Xavier Henry had 18 and Pau Gasol had 16, but no other Los Angeles player scored in double figures.

WIZARDS 102, KNICKS 101

NEW YORK (AP) — Bradley Beal's driving layup with 6 seconds remaining carried Washington past New York. The Knicks didn't use one of their three remaining timeouts after Beal's basket. Carmelo Anthony took the inbounds pass, dribbled the up court and attempted a 3-pointer that bounced off the rim as time expired.

Beal led the Wizards with 21 points, including their final seven as Washington erased a six-point fourth-quarter deficit.

Martell Webster added 30 points and John Wall 20 points for the Wizards.

Anthony finished with 32 for the Knicks.

HEAT 117, JAZZ 94

MIAMI (AP) — LeBron James finished with 30 points, nine rebounds and nine assists despite sitting some of the second half after twisting his left ankle. Dwyane Wade added 27 points and Miami rolled past Utah. □

Elam said. "It was no disrespect meant to Calvin. He's the best in the league, so why would I challenge him? Words just got stirred up."

The Lions started strong, with Reggie Bush running for a 14-yard touchdown on the opening drive.

Detroit, though, got in its own way as it often has this year.

Johnson dropped a pass that would've converted a third-and-15 deep in Ravens territory.

On the ensuing drive, Tucker kicked his first of three field goals in the first half — two of which were set up by penalties against Detroit.

Tucker's next field goal was set up by a pass-interference call against safety Don Carey. □

## NFL ROUNDUP

Continued from Page 18

Detroit (7-7) has hurt its playoff chances by losing four of five, falling out of sole possession of first place in the NFC North to third behind the division-leading Chicago Bears and Green Bay.

"This is a setback, no question," Lions coach Jim Schwartz said. "We had control and now we need help. We have to get two wins and let the rest shake out."

Stafford's three interceptions followed a troubling trend for the franchise. He has 12 turnovers, including two fumbles, in his last five games.

Not coincidentally, the Lions have been able to over-

come those miscues well enough to win only one game during the slump. Joe Flacco, meanwhile, didn't turn the ball over and made enough subtle moves in and around the pocket to get sacked only once.

He has been sacked a career-high 42 times this season, but he stayed upright enough to move the ball into position for Tucker's big kick.

Flacco was 20 of 38 for 222 yards, including a 27-yard pass to Jacoby Jones to convert a third-and-15 from the Baltimore 28 on the game-winning drive. Jones had six receptions for 80 yards, and returned Detroit's last kick to the Baltimore 33.

Stafford was 18 of 34 for 235 yards with a TD and three



Detroit Lions tight end Joseph Fauria, left, defended by Baltimore Ravens inside linebacker Daryl Smith catches a 14-yard pass for a touchdown during the fourth quarter of an NFL football game in Detroit, Monday, Dec. 16, 2013.

Associated Press

interceptions — increasing his five-game total to 10 — for a season-low 48 quarterback rating.

"This was certainly not my best game," he acknowledged.

Johnson had six receptions for 98 yards and dropped two possibly pivotal passes thrown his way in the first half.

"We just put every guy on him to try to stop him,"

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## Crosby helps Penguins beat Maple Leafs



Pittsburgh Penguins goalie Marc-Andre Fleury (29) stops a shot by Toronto Maple Leafs' Nikolai Kulemin (41) in the third period of an NHL hockey game in Pittsburgh, Monday, Dec. 16, 2013. The Penguins won 3-1.

Associated Press

**PITTSBURGH (AP)** — Sidney Crosby's 19th goal of the season broke a tie with just over 6 minutes remaining and the Pittsburgh Penguins edged the Toronto Maple Leafs 3-1 on Monday night. Crosby took a centering pass from Pascal Dupuis and beat Toronto's Jonathan Bernier to the stick side to boost his point total to a league-leading 47. Chris Conner and Brandon Sutter also scored for the Penguins, who were playing without a number of regulars, including for-

ward Evgeni Malkin. Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 25 shots for Pittsburgh to improve to 27-3 in his past 30 home starts. Pittsburgh has won four straight and nine of 10. Morgan Rielly scored the first goal of his career for the Maple Leafs. Bernier made 28 saves, but couldn't stop Toronto from losing for the fourth time in its past five games.

**SENATORS 3, BLUES 2, OT**  
**OTTAWA (AP)** — Cody Ceci scored his first NHL goal in overtime and Ottawa beat St. Louis. Ceci recovered

a clearing attempt by the Blues and sent a wrist shot toward the St. Louis goal that beat Brian Elliott at 3:59 of the extra period. Jean-Gabriel Pageau and Bobby Ryan scored in regulation for the Senators, who picked up points for the fifth time in their past six games. Chris Stewart had both goals for the Blues and both came late in the second period and both were set up by Derek Roy.

**AVALANCHE 6, STARS 2**  
**DENVER (AP)** — Paul Stastny scored twice and add-

ed two assists and Colorado beat Dallas. Erik Johnson and Andre Benoit also scored in a four-goal second period, and Nathan MacKinnon and Tyson Barrie scored for Colorado. Tyler Seguin had a goal and an assist and Kevin Connauton scored his first NHL goal for the Stars, who have dropped three of the past four. Goalie Kari Lehtonen stopped 42 shots for Dallas.

**JETS 3, BLUE JACKETS 2**  
**COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP)** — Evander Kane returned from an injury to score a

goal and add an assist, leading Winnipeg over Columbus. Mark Scheifele and Bryan Little also had goals for the Jets, with Al Montoya making 22 saves. R.J. Umberger and Fedor Tyutin had the goals for the Blue Jackets, who had a first-period goal disallowed.

The Blue Jackets had picked up points in five of their past six games (4-1-1). The Jets won four of six games on a road swing only to return home and go 0-2-1 before heading to Columbus. □

# The True Gift

By: Dr. Carlos Viana

We have always been afraid of the dark. This year's Winter Solstice on 21 December, even here in Aruba we will have only eleven hours and twenty four minutes of sunlight. For our Northern neighbors at solstice, the sun rises around 9 a.m. It sets about 3 p.m. A mere six hours of daylight. Up North, even if you sleep for eight hours, you spend more of your waking time in darkness than in light.

Many of the ancient traditions surrounding the Winter Solstice are concerned with coping with the darkness and the evils it was thought to harbor, and helping the return of light and warmth. All over our prehistory, the impulse to celebrate solstice was the same celebration of the cycle of nature and a reaffirmation of the continuation of life. Worldwide, our ancients worshiped their earth goddess as she gives birth to the Sun God and hope for new light is reborn. Ancient Incas celebrated a festival of Inti Raymi, or Festival of the Sun where the god of the Sun is honored.

For some this time of the year is called Yule, for others it is called Christmas, for some Hanukkah or "Festival of lights", for still others the "Fast of Ramadan". In India the "Makara Sankranta" is a holy day celebrated by Hindus the day after the winter solstice. The light of the returning sun represents human warmth, charity, and love, replacing the darkness of human selfishness. It also represents

the gift of intellectual illumination and the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong.

The Chinese Solstice feast of Dong Zhi is celebration that can be traced to understanding of the different energies of yin and yang, which represent balance and harmony in life. We acknowledge that the yin qualities of darkness and cold are at their most powerful at this time, but it is also the turning point, giving way to the light and warmth of yang. For this reason, the Dong Zhi Festival is a time for optimism, when everyone dons new clothes, visits family with gifts and feasts on expensive dishes.

Over the years and by different religions the winter solstice celebrations have had a very different shape, however, the worldwide message, no matter the religion, is about bringing light, which represents hope into the darkness, representing the despair of ignorance.

This Holiday Season our table will support our Advent wreath often made from the trimmings of the Christmas tree, shaped into a circle to symbolize the eternal God and our ongoing life. It also commemorates new life and a fresh start to the upcoming year. With its rounded garland and four candles, the wreath is a decorative extension of our hope. A fifth candle, generally larger in size and white in color, will be placed in the

center of the wreath and lit on Christmas morning.

The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent. But, our candles represent much more. Each is a remembrance and a prayer of thanks. The first candle is for our patients; those open-minded individuals who allow us to serve our community by allowing us to remove a little of their pain. Thank you for your trust.

The second candle is for the many of you who

the healing tools. Thank you for taking a chance and believing there could be a better solution.

The third candle is for you my readers. Your comments and encouragement are a strong motivation to this column. The fourth is for the Sacred Order of Hope. Ordained as a Deacon, Medical Missionary, I joined this medical religious Order to administer sacred ministry to help suffering mankind through sacred medicines.



believing in my message, facilitate our effectiveness by providing the services and products that make all this possible. The owners, editors, and staff of this fine newspaper are always ready to assist to get the message out to you. Our medical colleagues have shown us that when physicians work together the real winners are our patients. Thanks to our local importers of healthy, natural supplements and safe healthy products who strive to provide to our community with

Our fifth candle that is placed in the center of the wreath is there as gratitude for my two sons coming into our lives; for Phyllis encouraging me to press on with what I believe; for our assistant Amy, and for my friends, whom I can count on one hand and who believe strongly in our message. Thank you for believing.

Get The Point! One of my heroes, Mahatma Gandhi said: "The greatest power in the world is that of the Soul. Peace is its highest

expression. Peace requires one first be brave enough to love another; to tolerate another and to trust another." What a relief when the days begin to lengthen again; that I am able just as our forefathers battled cold and darkness with lights and fires, so we today battle spiritual darkness with information and education. May you and your family have a safe Holiday and may all of you ring in the New Year with a resolution for better health.

CARLOS VIANA, Ph. D. is an Oriental Medical Doctor (O.M.D.) having studied in Shanghai, China; a Board Cert. Clinical Nutritionist (C.C.N.), a fellow member of the Board Certified Association of Addiction Professionals (C.Ad.), the Chairperson of the Latin American Committee of the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology (IAOMT), a Rejuvenating Cell Therapist and specializes in Anti-Aging Medicine, has a weekly radio program, writes and lectures extensively. For information: VIANA NATURAL HEALING CENTER NV, Kibaima 7, Aruba, TEL: 585-1270 FAX: 585-4789, Web Sight: [www.vianaheal.com](http://www.vianaheal.com)

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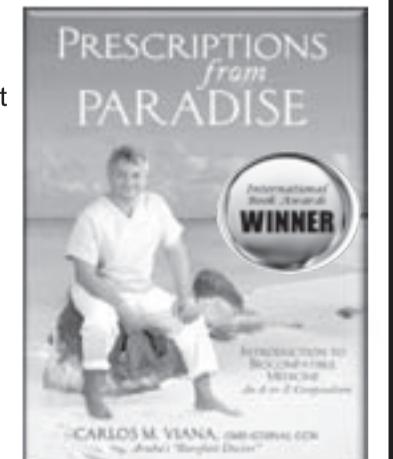
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# Google's top searches peer into society's mindset

MICHAEL LIEDTKE

AP Technology Writer

**SAN FRANCISCO (AP)** — Death, devices and celebrity drove the quest for more information on Google's search engine this year.

Three of the world's four fastest-rising search requests on Google were triggered by the deaths of famous men.

Former South African President Nelson Mandela, who died earlier this month, occupied the top spot, followed by "Fast & Furious" movie star Paul Walker, who died in a Nov. 30 car crash. "Glee" TV series cast member Cory Monteith, who died of a drug overdose in July, ranked fourth in an annual retrospective released Tuesday.

The Boston Marathon bombings in April that killed three people ranked sixth. The iPhone 5S, the latest upgrade in Apple's most popular product line, finished third in Google's rankings. A rival smartphone, the Samsung Galaxy S4, took the eighth spot. PlayStation 4, Sony Corp.'s newest video game console, held the ninth position.

The Top 10 was rounded out by the "Harlem Shake," a song that inspired a procession of amusing dance videos, at No. 5; "royal baby" Prince George, the heir to England's throne, at No. 7; and North Korea, whose saber-rattling has become a source of inter-

national tension, at No. 10. Google's review follows annual round-ups compiled during the previous two weeks by its main search rivals — Microsoft Corp.'s Bing, Yahoo Inc. and Ask.com. Although its list usually comes last each year, Google's breakdown typically provides the greatest insight into the world's collective mindset because the company's technology processes about two out of every three search requests made on the Internet.

Bing ranks a distant second with 18 percent of the U.S. search market, and even less in most other countries. Yahoo, which relies on Bing's technology, handles the third most search requests.

Because the same inquiries tend to crop up from one year to the next, Google tries to keep its list fresh by focusing on the queries that post the biggest annual gains — a measurement that the Mountain View, California, company calls "trending."

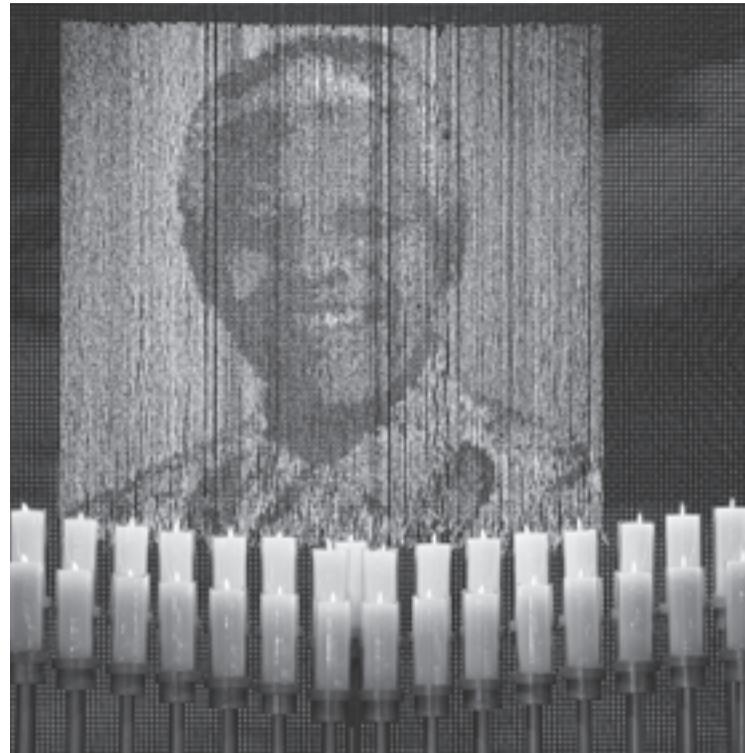
Google also is slicing its vast database of search requests into a hodge-podge of other categories spanning 72 countries, up from 55 last year. In the U.S. alone, Google is compiling more than 90 different lists examining the hottest inquiries about everything from finances to pop culture.

A handful of the rankings

are based on the total number of requests entered into Google's search engine, instead of breaking them down by the variance from last year.

Google's pecking order of the most-searched people in the U.S. consists exclusively of singers, with the exception of reality-TV show star Kim Kardashian, who is engaged to be married to one of her peers on the list, hip-hop artist Kanye West (she ranks No. 3, while he came in at No. 10). The top spot is held by Miley Cyrus, who also was No. 1 in Yahoo's search rankings for this year (Kardashian ranked second on Yahoo's list).

Cyrus, Kardashian and Justin Bieber were the only three people to appear in each of the most-searched lists from Google, Bing and Yahoo. The lists of most-searched people on Google and Bing shared the most in common, with six stars appearing in both categories. Beside Cyrus, Kardashian and Bieber, the other three to make the cut on both Google and Bing were Beyoncé Knowles (No. 1 on Bing, No. 5 on Google); Rihanna (No. 3 on Bing, No. 6 on Google); and Taylor Swift (No. 4 on Bing, No. 7 on Google). The Web surfers who use Bing evidently have quite different tastes in television from those who search on Google.



Candles illuminate a portrait of Nelson Mandela during the funeral service for former South African president Nelson Mandela in Qunu, South Africa, Sunday, December 15, 2013.

Associated Press

Only two series, "Big Bang Theory" and "Big Brother" appeared in each of the two rivals' rankings' of the year's most-searched TV shows. "Big Bang Theory" ranked first on Bing's list, a distinction held by "Breaking Bad" in Google's rankings. The two search engines couldn't agree on the most popular morning news show either, with NBC's "Today Show" making it on Bing's list of most frequent TV requests and ABC's "Good Morning America" securing a spot on Google's list. Google was on its own list of trending stocks this year, ranking No. 4. That's not a big surprise, given the company's market value has surged by about 50 percent so far this year, its biggest gain on Wall Street since 2008. That was still not enough to surpass Google rival Facebook Inc. on the list of trendiest stocks. Facebook's shares have more than doubled so far this year. After Facebook came electric car maker Tesla Motors, whose stock has more than quadrupled this year, and online messaging service Twitter Inc., whose stock has more than doubled since its Wall Street debut last month. □

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## GlaxoSmithKline to scrap individual sales targeting

DANICA KIRKA

Associated Press

**LONDON (AP)** — British drug company GlaxoSmithKline said Tuesday it would stop paying doctors to promote its products at speaking engagements and scrap individual sales targets, months after its ethics were challenged by a bribery scandal in China.

The group announced sweeping changes to its marketing practices, which also included a halt to direct financial support to health care professionals to attend medical conferences. However, it left open the possibility of funding through grants.

"It is patients' interests that always come first," Andrew Witty, the company's chief executive, insisted. "We recognize that we have an important role to play in providing doctors with information about our medicines, but this must be done clearly, transparently and without any perception of conflict of interest."

GSK is influential in big pharma, the world's sixth-largest drugs company in terms of global sales. Its major products include the respiratory drug Advair and the cardio and urogenital drug Avodart.

It follows another drug company, AstraZeneca, in tightening its practices on conferences. In 2011, AstraZeneca decided that it would offer support for a medical professional to attend a conference only in limited circumstances, with the specific aim of contributing to high-quality scientific discourse.

GSK insists that the changes were unrelated to the scandal, but it comes as it tries to distance itself from the troubles engulfing its operations in China, which Witty has said were conducted by people "acting outside of our processes." In July, he insisted that "99.9 percent" of company employees play by the rules.

Chinese police allege that four employees paid bribes to doctors to encourage them to prescribe medications.

The company says that under its new program, individual sales targets will be replaced by a new system in which GSK employees will be rewarded for their technical knowledge, their quality of service and overall performance. The goal is for the new system to be in place by early 2015.

It added that these changes were influenced by a similar program introduced in the United States in 2011.

"The 'Patient First' program bases compensation for sales professionals who work directly with prescribing health care professionals on a blend of qualitative measures and the overall performance of their business, rather than the number of prescriptions generated," the company said. But analysts such as Alastair McCaig at IG argued the company decided to act with an ethical bent rather than await the consequences of the China scandal.

"With the bribery investigation going on in China, it looks like the company has decided to jump before being pushed, as it is forced to do something to tackle its conflict of interest," he said.

The company said the changes were also unrelated to past troubles in the United States. It paid \$3 billion last year and pleaded guilty to promoting two drugs for unapproved uses and failing to disclose important safety information on a third. The criminal case was accompanied by a civil settlement in which the government said the company's improper marketing included providing doctors with European hunting trips, high-paid speaking tours and even tickets to a Madonna concert.

At the time, the company said it had learned from its mistakes.

Health care advocates welcomed the change in GSK's position, but some, like Tim Reed, the executive director of Health Action International, said self-regulation remains a big problem in the industry. □

## Stocks slip as Fed meets on stimulus

STEVE ROTHWELL

AP Business Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — The stock market edged slightly lower Tuesday as the Federal Reserve started a two-day policy meeting that may herald the beginning of the end for its economic stimulus.

Few expect that the Fed will announce that it plans to pare back, or 'taper,' its huge bond-buying

Eight of the ten industrial groups in the S&P 500 declined, led by phone companies. Materials stocks and technology companies edged higher.

A couple of big companies bucked the downward trend after pledging to hand more cash to stockholders.

Boeing rose \$1.16, or 1 percent, to \$135.88 after the plane maker increased its

strategy. The index fell 3.1 percent in August when investors thought that the policy would change in September.

Instead of worrying about the market's immediate reaction to the Fed's announcement on Wednesday, investors should focus on the positive backdrop for stocks, said Liz Ann Sonders, chief investment strategist at Charles



**Trader Greg Mulligan works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. The stock market edged slightly lower Tuesday as the Federal Reserve started a two-day policy meeting that may herald the beginning of the end for its economic stimulus.**

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

program after its meeting wraps up on Wednesday. However, good news on the U.S. economy this month, including a blockbuster jobs report, and a budget deal in Washington appeared to have increased the likelihood of a change.

"It's just the taper drama, that's really all the market seems focused on," said Dean Junkans, CIO for Wells Fargo Private Bank. "The chances of them doing something tomorrow are higher than they were a month ago."

Major stock indices fell, but just slightly. The Standard & Poor's 500 index eased five points, or 0.3 percent, to 1,781. The Dow Jones industrial average crept down nine points, or 0.1 percent, to 15,875.26. The Nasdaq composite edged lower by five points, or 0.1 percent, to 4,023.68.

stock buyback program by \$10 billion and raised its dividend 52 percent. 3M climbed \$3.73, or 3 percent, to \$131.39 after raising its dividend by 35 percent. The company also forecast solid earnings next year.

Stocks have surged this year as the Fed kept buying \$85 billion in bonds every month to hold down long-term interest rates. As well as boosting the economy, that stimulus has made stocks a more attractive investment compared to bonds.

The only setbacks for the market this year have come when investors were nervous that the Fed was about to cut back its stimulus.

The S&P 500 index dropped 1.5 percent in June when Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke outlined a potential exit for the Fed from its stimulus

Schwab.

The economy is improving, companies are investing more, and earnings are forecast to grow at a steady rate, ensuring there will be demand for stocks.

"Dips that we get are not going to be terribly severe," Sonders said.

In government bond trading, the yield on the 10-year Treasury note dropped to 2.84 percent, from 2.88 percent on Monday, as investors bought bonds on a day when the government said consumer prices remained flat. When prices rise, a trend known as inflation, the value of bonds falls.

In commodities trading, the price of gold fell \$14.30, or 1 percent, to \$1,230 an ounce. Oil dropped 26 cents, or 0.3 percent, to \$97.22 a barrel.

Among other trends in the market: □

## STREET BRIEFS

## Boeing exec: search process slims for 777X

**SEATTLE (AP)** — A Boeing executive says the company is moving to narrow its search for a place to build its 777X passenger plane. Boeing Commercial Airplanes CEO Ray Conner also told employees in a message Tuesday that the rejection of a new contract proposal by the machinists union was disappointing. The company is seeking concessions that could lower production costs in the region for the 777X. Local union leaders have said they didn't see the point of bringing the latest offer to a vote because it was too similar to one that was previously rejected. Conner says Boeing has received 777X proposals from 22 U.S. states covering 54 sites. □

## Microsoft to pick CEO early in next year

**REDMOND, Wash. (AP)** — Microsoft expects to finish its search for CEO Steve Ballmer's replacement by early next year. Board director John Thompson, who heads the company's executive search committee, said so in a blog post Tuesday. Ballmer said in August he would retire within 12 months.

Thompson said the committee initially identified over 100 candidates, spoke with several dozen, whittled the group to 20 and then narrowed the list further. He said the company's full board has also been involved in the discussion. He re-iterated Chairman Bill Gates' comments at the company's November shareholders meeting, saying the job involves running a complex business and requires someone to lead a "highly technical organization and work with top technical talent." □

## US homebuilder confidence surges in December

**ALEX VEIGA**  
**AP Real Estate Writer**

U.S. homebuilders' confidence bounced back strongly this month, a sign that construction and industry hiring may pick up in coming months. The National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo builder sentiment index released Tuesday climbed to 58. That was up from 54 in November

heading into next year's spring home-selling season also improved.

The index has stayed above 50 now for seven straight months after being below that level since May 2006. This month's reading is 11 points higher than a year ago. It reflects a U.S. housing market fueled by steady job growth and still-low mortgage rates.

The latest index suggests

David Crowe, the NAHB's chief economist. "We continue to look for a gradual improvement in the housing recovery in the year ahead."

Mortgage rates peaked at 4.6 percent in August and have stabilized since September, when the Federal Reserve surprised markets by taking no action on starting to reduce its bond purchases. Its bond

the average rate on the 30-year loan declined to 4.42 percent from 4.46 percent a week earlier. In November last year, the average had dipped as low as 3.31 percent, the lowest on records dating to 1971. Sales of new homes slowed over the summer after mortgage rates rose sharply and a tight supply of homes for sale boosted prices. The combination made home-buying less affordable.

But Americans ramped up purchases of new homes in October 25.4 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 444,000, according to the Commerce Department.

All told, sales of newly built homes have risen 21.6 percent for the 12 months ending in October. Still, the pace remains well below the 700,000 consistent with a healthy market.

And there are signs that builders are preparing for less growth. Approved permits to build single-family houses began to flat line in the spring, while spending on home construction spending fell 0.5 percent in October from September.

Still, the latest NAHB survey, which included responses from 346 builders, shows builders' outlook is rising again after dimming during the 16-day partial shutdown in October.

A measure of current sales conditions for single-family homes climbed six points to 64, the highest level since December 2005. □



In this Monday, Dec. 16, 2013 photo, workers guide a vertical girder into place during the construction of a building in Boston's South Boston neighborhood. The National Association of Home Builders reports on its index of confidence among builders for December on Tuesday, Dec. 17, 2013. (AP Photo/Steven Senne)

and matched an eight-year high reached in August. Readings above 50 indicate that more builders view sales conditions as good than poor.

In addition, builders' view of current sales conditions jumped this month to the highest level in eight years. And their outlook for sales

that builders remain optimistic that the housing recovery will endure even though mortgage rates have risen in recent months.

"The recent spike in mortgage interest rates has not deterred consumers as rates are still near historically low levels," said

that purchases are intended to keep long-term interest rates low, including mortgage rates.

The Fed ends a two-day policy meeting Wednesday, after which it will release a statement and projections for the economy. Mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said last week that

## US current account drops to \$94.8 billion in 3Q

**MARTIN CRUTSINGER**  
**AP Economics Writer**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The U.S. current account deficit narrowed in the July-September quarter to the lowest level in four years as a rise in Americans' foreign investment earnings helped offset a bigger deficit in goods.

The deficit in the current account declined to \$94.8 billion in the third quarter, the Commerce Department reported Tuesday. It was the smallest imbalance since the third quar-

ter of 2009 when the country was climbing out of a deep recession. The deficit was 1.8 percent lower than a revised \$96.6 billion deficit in the April-June quarter.

The current account is the country's broadest trade measure covering not only goods and services but also investment flows.

For the third quarter, the deficit in goods increased by 1.7 percent but this was offset by a 7.1 percent rise in investment earnings.

A smaller trade deficit usu-

ally means that U.S. companies are producing more to meet domestic and overseas demand.

Goods exports did rise in the third quarter, reflecting a boom in energy production in America which has lifted U.S. energy exports to record highs. But imports were up by a larger amount, led by a big increase in shipments of foreign-made autos. Oil imports also rose during the quarter.

The surplus in services rose 0.5 percent, reflecting in-

creases in travel and in royalty payments.

The big rise in investment income reflected gains in interest payments and stock dividends paid to Americans on their foreign holdings.

The various changes left the current account deficit at 2.2 percent of the total economy, down from 2.3 percent in the second quarter. It was the smallest percentage since the deficit stood at 2 percent of the overall economy in the first quarter of 1998. □

Mutts



6 Chix



Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

1	8	6										
			5	2	7	4	1					
2					9							
	5						6					
6						2	7	4				
	3	4	2		1	8		9				
8	2		9		3				5			
3				4			1	9				
	4	9										

Difficulty Level ★★★

12/18

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

4	6	1	3	8	5	9	2	7				
9	3	5	6	7	2	1	4	8				
8	2	7	9	4	1	6	3	5				
2	4	8	7	5	6	3	1	9				
1	7	6	8	9	3	4	5	2				
3	5	9	2	1	4	8	7	6				
6	8	4	5	3	7	2	9	1				
7	9	3	1	2	8	5	6	4				
5	1	2	4	6	9	7	8	3				

Yesterday's puzzle answer

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14						15				16			
17						18				19			
20					21			22	23				
					24			25					
26	27	28					29						
30			31		32			33		34	35	36	
37		38	39				40	41					
42		43	44				45	46					
51	52	53					54						
55					56					57	58	59	
60			61	62					63				
64			65						66				
67			68						69				

Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

12/18/13

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

A	R	T	S	G	I	A	N	T	S	A	F	E
L	O	O	K	U	N	S	E	R	O	B	E	Y
S	A	R	I	S	N	A	R	E	M	U	T	E
O	M	E	L	E	T	S	V	A	C	D	A	T
U	T	T	E	R	M	A	S	R	I	F	L	E
S	O	O	T	G	A	L	N	E	A	R	E	R
E	R	R	S	E	D	A	T	E	S	A	D	O
R	A	S	C	A	V	T	P	I	G	S	P	I
S	H	O	A	L	B	E	T	M	E	L	E	E
P	A	C	E	P	A	E	P	A	E	A	E	E
S	T	R	I	D	E	S	B	U	T	C	H	E
P	O	E	T	C	I	D	E	R	H	I	R	E
U	T	T	E	R	C	I	D	E	R	H	I	E
S	O	O	T	G	A	L	N	E	A	R	E	R
E	R	R	S	E	D	A	T	E	S	A	D	O

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12/18/13

2 Grow weary  
3 Singles  
4 Repeat aloud from memory  
5 Beg  
6 Make void  
7 DiMaggio and Montana  
8 Tasty tidbit for an aardvark  
9 Outcome  
10 Without warning  
11 At no time  
12 Dentist's tool  
13 In a weird way  
21 Rowed  
23 Tidy  
25 Refers to  
26 Bewildered  
27 Agony  
64 Work hard  
65 Luau garlands  
66 Gets furious  
67 Remain  
68 Sound; healthy  
69 Thicket  
DOWN  
1 Snow toy  
40 Watery part of the blood  
43 Come in last  
45 Toddler's one-piece garment  
48 Military awards  
50 Cheery  
51 Thick drinks  
52 Dimwit  
53 Capital of Bulgaria  
54 Memory failure  
56 Abel's brother  
57 Consequently  
58 In \_\_\_ of; as a substitute for  
59 In case  
62 Caribbean

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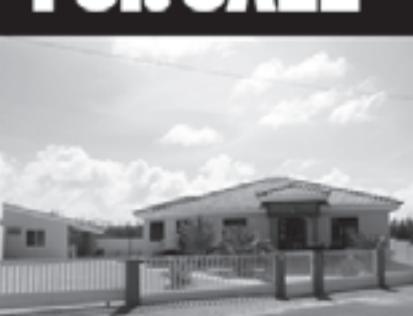
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# Study: Yellowstone magma much bigger than thought

MATT VOLZ

Associated Press

**HELENA, Montana (AP)** — The hot molten rock beneath Yellowstone National Park is 2 1/2 times larger than previously estimated, meaning the park's supervolcano has the potential to erupt with a force about 2,000 times the size of Mount St. Helens, according to a new study.

By measuring seismic waves from earthquakes, scientists were able to map the magma chamber underneath the Yellowstone caldera as 55 miles (88.5 kilometers) long, lead author Jamie Farrell of the University of Utah said Monday. The chamber is 18 miles (29 kilometers) wide and runs at depths from 3 to 9 miles (5 to 14 1/2 kilometers) below the earth, he added. That means there is enough volcanic material below the surface to match the largest of the supervolcano's three eruptions over the last 2.1 million years, Farrell said.

The largest blast — the volcano's first — was 2,000 times the size of the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens in Washington state.



**In this Friday, Aug. 15, 1997 file photo, an unidentified pair of visitors to the Yellowstone National Park photograph the Old Faithful geyser as it rockets 100-feet skyward in Wyoming. Hundreds of small earthquakes at Yellowstone National Park in recent weeks have been an unsettling reminder for some people that underneath the park's famous geysers and majestic scenery lurks one of the world's biggest volcanoes.**

Associated Press

A similar one would spew large amounts of volcanic material in the atmo-

sphere, where it would circle the earth, he said.

"It would be a global

event," Farrell said. "There would be a lot of destruction and a lot of impacts around the globe."

The last Yellowstone eruption happened 640,000 years ago, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. For years, observers tracking earthquake swarms under Yellowstone have warned the caldera is overdue to erupt.

Farrell dismissed that notion, saying there isn't enough data to estimate the timing of the next eruption.

"We do believe there will be another eruption, we just don't know when," he said.

There are enough instruments monitoring the seismic activity of Yellowstone that scientists would likely know well ahead of time if there was unusual activity happening and magma was moving to the surface, Farrell said.

The USGS' Yellowstone Volcano Observatory listed the park's volcano alert level as "normal" for December.

Yellowstone attracts millions of visitors with its geothermal features of gey-

fers, hot springs and bubbling mud pots. The park just opened its gates on Sunday for its winter season.

Park officials did not immediately return a call for comment.

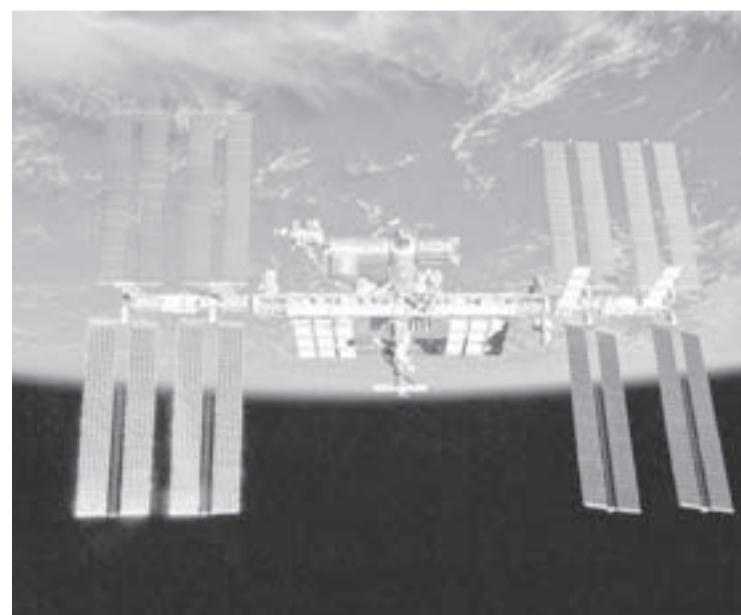
A large earthquake at Yellowstone is much more likely than a volcano eruption, Farrell said.

The 7.5-magnitude Hebgen Lake earthquake killed 28 people there in 1959.

Farrell presented his findings last week to the American Geophysical Union. He said he is submitting it to a scholarly journal for peer review and publication.

Brigham Young University geology professor Eric Christiansen said the study by Farrell and University of Utah Professor Bob Smith is very important to understanding the evolution of large volcanoes such as Yellowstone's.

"It helps us understand the active system," Christiansen said. "It's not at the point where we need to worry about an imminent eruption, but every piece of information we have will prepare us for that eventuality." □



## NASA orders urgent spacewalk repairs at station

MARCI DUNN

AP Aerospace Writer

**CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida (AP)** — NASA has ordered up a series of urgent spacewalks to fix a broken

**In this image provided by NASA the International Space Station is shown with the backdrop of Earth.**

Associated Press

cooling line at the International Space Station.

Station managers decided Tuesday to send two American astronauts out as soon as possible to replace a pump that contains a bad valve. It's a big job that will require at least two or three spacewalks. The first is scheduled for Saturday. The spacewalks are taking

priority over the launch of a supply ship from Virginia. The delivery had been scheduled for this week, but is now delayed until January.

Half of the station's cooling system shut down last week. The six-man crew had to turn off nonessential equipment, including science experiments. □

## Cat-mouse game might explain how felines got tame

MALCOLM RITTER

AP Science Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — A cat-and-mouse game played out in a Chinese village some 5,300 years ago is helping scientists understand how wild felines transformed into the tame

pets we know today.

In fact, it was the cat's appetite that started it down the path to domestication, scientists believe. The grain stored by ancient farmers was a magnet for rodents. And that drew wild cats into villages to hunt the lit-

tle critters. Over time, wild cats adapted to village life and became tamer around their human hosts. That's the leading theory, anyway, for how wild cats long ago were transformed and became ancestors of today's house cats. □

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# Influential country singer Ray Price dead at 87

CHRIS TALBOTT  
JAMIE STENGLE  
Associated Press

**DALLAS (AP)** — Good friends like Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard got more credit for their contrary ways and trend-setting ideas, but it was Ray Price who set the precedent for change in country music more than a decade earlier.

Price passed away Monday at his Texas home, having long outlasted most of his country music contemporaries and the prognosis doctors gave him when they discovered his pancreatic cancer in 2011. He was 87.

The way the Country Music Hall of Fame member fought cancer was an apt metaphor for the way he lived his life, always fiercely charting a path few others might have the fortitude to follow.

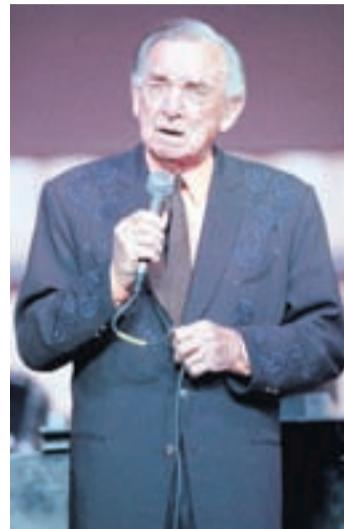
Along the way he changed the sound of country music, collaborated with and inspired the genre's biggest stars and remained relevant for more than half a century.

"Ray Price was a giant in Texas and country western music. Besides one of the greatest voices that ever sang a note, Ray's career spanned over 65 years in a business where 25 years would be amazing," said Ray Benson of the country music group Asleep at the Wheel.

Price, one of country music's most popular and influential singers and bandleaders, had more than 100 hits and was one of the last living connections to Hank Williams.

Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum historian Michael McCall said Price "was one of his generation's most important musical innovators," popularizing the bedrock 4/4 shuffle beat that can still be heard on every honky-tonk jukebox and most country radio stations in the world.

"His emphasis on the shuffle rhythm influenced every



In a Jan. 7, 2011, file photo, Country Music Hall of Fame member and Grammy award winner Ray Price celebrates his 86th birthday by performing in Bullard, Texas.

Associated Press

generation to follow and remains a staple of country dance floors everywhere, especially in the Southwest," said McCall.

Price died Monday afternoon at his ranch outside Mount Pleasant, Texas, said Billy Mack Jr., who was acting as a family spokesman.

Price's cancer had recently spread to his liver, intestines and lungs, according to East Texas Medical Center in Tyler. He stopped aggressive treatments and left the hospital last Thursday to receive hospice care at home.

At the time, his wife, Janie Price, relayed what she called her husband's "final message" to his fans: "I love my fans and have devoted my life to reaching out to them. I appreciate their support all these years, and I hope I haven't let them down. I am at peace. I love Jesus. I'm going to be just fine. Don't worry about me. I'll see you again one day."

Perhaps best known for his version of the Kris Kristofferson song "For the Good Times," a pop hit in 1970, the velvet-voiced Price was a giant among traditional country performers in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, as likely to defy a trend as he was to defend one. □

# Nirvana, Kiss, Peter Gabriel headed to Rock Hall

MESFIN FEKADU

AP Music Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Nirvana, Kiss and Peter Gabriel will be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame next year.

The Rock Hall announced Tuesday that Hall and Oates, Linda Ronstadt and Cat Stevens also will be inducted April 10 at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn.

Artists are eligible for induction 25 years after their first release. Nirvana received a nomination in its first year of eligibility and next year the band will celebrate the 25th anniversary of its debut, "Bleach." The induction comes 20 years after frontman Kurt Cobain committed suicide at age 27.

"For once ... I'm speechless. From the basements, to the dingy clubs, to the broken down vans, to ... the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame," former Nirvana drummer Dave Grohl, now the frontman for Foo Fighters, said in a statement Tuesday. "I'd like to thank the committee not only for this induction, but also for recognizing Nirvana for what we were: pure rock and roll."

"Thank you most of all to Kurt Cobain," bassist Krist Novoselic said in the statement issued on behalf of Nirvana. "And to everyone who's kept rock music going strong for 60 years and counting."

This year also marked first-time nominations for Hall and Oates, Gabriel and



This Oct. 11, 2012 file image released by Starpix shows, from left, Gene Simmons, Paul Stanley, Eric Singer, Tommy Thayer of KISS as the band arrives at SiriusXM offices to promote their latest release "Monster," in New York.

Associated Press

Ronstadt, Kiss and Stevens, who have been nominated in the past, made the cut after being absent from the list for several years.

Peter Criss, Kiss' original drummer and vocalist, said the band changed rock forever by raising the bar for live performances.

"We were four guys from New York City who brought Barnum & Bailey into rock and roll," he told The Associated Press. Criss last toured with the band in 2003 and hopes to be asked to perform with the other three founding members at the induction ceremony at New York's Barclays Center. The Hall of Fame is in Cleveland, but the location of the induction ceremony varies from year to year.

"We wanted the makeup and the costumes and the

bombs," Criss said. "Our idea was to give people a hell of a lot more for their money. We changed music by insisting you can't go up there and just sing anymore. That's going to stand forever."

Singer/guitarist Paul Stanley, who with bassist Gene Simmons has anchored Kiss' changing lineup for 40 years, said the band never cared when critics slammed them.

"The spirit of rock and roll for me has always meant following the paths I choose, regardless of what my critics or my peers think," he said. "For 40 years, Kiss has built an army that apologizes to no one, and I'm honored to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame knowing we have remained true to ourselves and our fans." □

## Cowell: New judges, more change for 'X Factor'

LYNN ELBER

AP Television Writer

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Simon Cowell is plotting changes for "The X Factor," including new judges and a new role for him.

Cowell is the show's producer. The British music industry executive told a teleconference Monday that he expects the singing

contest to return next season on Fox.

He says "X Factor" may be cut back to one night instead of two, and format changes are under discussion to keep it fresh.

Cowell says the judging panel probably will be different. Besides Cowell, the "X Factor" judges include Demi Lovato, Kelly Row-

land and Paulina Rubio.

Cowell says he has recruits in mind, but he declined to identify them. He says he envisions what he called a "different kind of role" for himself, but he wouldn't be more specific.

The show's ratings have dipped in season three. The winner will be announced on the finale Thursday. □

# Sundance Institute doesn't just mean films anymore

**BRADY McCOMBS**  
Associated Press

**SALT LAKE CITY (AP)** — Robert Redford's Sundance Institute has gained worldwide recognition for helping bring risky, creative and boundary-pushing films into the mainstream through its star-studded annual film festival that is set to kick off again next month in Utah.

Now, the institute's lesser-known theater program is also cementing its reputation for helping develop celebrated plays and musicals in the same avant-garde mold of the film festival.

The 11 plays in theaters this year that were nurtured and polished during Sundance theater workshops are more than ever before. They explore territory that mainstream plays often shy away from.

They include the critically-acclaimed "Fun Home," a musical based on a lesbian comic book about a gay dad's suicide at The Public Theater in New York City; "Appropriate," a play heading to New York about adult children who discover chilling photos of lynchings at their late father's Southern plantation; and the Broadway show, "A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder," a musi-



This image released by The O+M Co. shows, from left, Jefferson Mays as Henry D'Ysquith, Jennifer Smith, and Bryce Pinkham as Monty Navarro in a scene from "A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder."

Associated Press

cal comedy about a British man who murders the eight heirs that stand in between him and a family fortune. Sundance's growing influence on theater comes after two decades of gradually increasing the number of labs and workshops it holds each year and broadening its search for the next great, risk-taking playwright.

Through its five workshops and labs, including the main three-week summer program in the mountains

of northern Utah, the program creates a collaborative, non-competitive environment that unleashes the creativity needed to make memorable plays, say participants and theater directors.

One key to that: the Sundance Theater Program only develops the works, meaning participants aren't competing against each other to earn the financial backing of the institute for production credits. Sundance focuses only on

helping playwrights and directors finish, fine-tune and polish plays and musicals, leaves it to professional theaters to pick up the works for production.

Theaters are attracted to theater pieces that have gone through Sundance workshops because they represent the spirit of adventure and experimentation the program encourages, said Oskar Eustis, a past participant in the workshops and artistic director of The Public The-

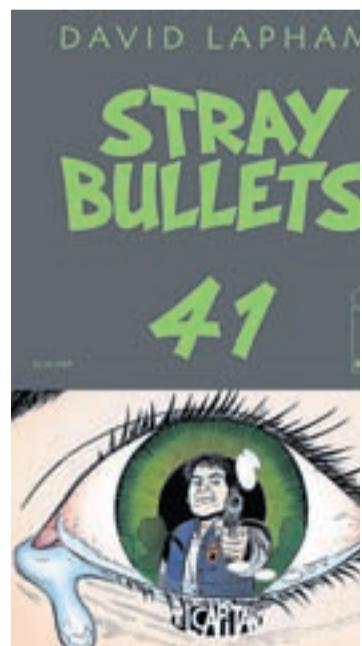
ater, where "Fun Home" is playing.

"There is genuine artistic exploration," said Eustis. "Even if there are shows that end up being commercially successful they weren't shows that were designed to be commercially successful. They were designed to tell the truth of an artist's experience."

The program's artistic director, Philip Himberg, said he and his staff read 800-900 plays submitted each year from around the country before selecting seven or eight people for their summer workshop in Utah. They have scouts watching local theater around the country in search of plays and playwrights that represent the geographic, gender, racial and social prisms of the American landscape, he said. Last summer's participants ranged from young novice playwrights to well-known Pulitzer Prize-winning playwrights. "What keeps me up at night, what makes me anxious, is that someone else is going to discover a playwright before I do," said Himberg, who took over the program in 1996.

At the workshop, paid for private grants, playwrights alternate days writing with days rehearsing with theater actors. □

## 8 years after it stopped, 'Stray Bullets' returns



**In this cover image released by Image Comics, shown is David Lapham's "Stray Bullets" which is returning to comic shelves in March 2014 with issue No. 41 to conclude the series, but is also being followed by a sequel "Stray Bullets: Killers" and omnibus collecting the entire first series in print and digital formats, too.**

Associated Press

**MATT MOORE**

Associated Press

Nearly eight years after its last issue, "Stray Bullets" is headed back to comic shops with a final story, a sequel series and a one-shot omnibus collecting all 41 issues of the seminal title created by writer and artist David Lapham.

Image Comics, home to numerous creator-owned titles including "The Walking Dead," said Tuesday the series' return is set for March. Lapham, who has been writing other comics in the interim, called it the right time to bring the story to audiences old and new.

"Stray Bullets," he said has "always been home to me" and during the time off, he's

sparked new ideas for the series that sees him not just wrap its first, complete arc with issue 41, but move on to "Stray Bullets: Killers," too.

Both issues, along with the omnibus, will be released March 12 in print and through digital storefronts, too, Image said. Lapham said Monday that he halted the series in 2005 to raise a family, along with other "priorities that prevented us from giving it that 100 percent commitment."

In the interim, though, he said the title was never far from his mind, even as he wrote Vertigo's "Young Liars" and penned titles like "Terror Inc." for Marvel and "Kull" for Dark Horse Comics.

"I've always been, through the years of doing other works and others, I've always had this on my mind and ideas," he said, deciding that the time was right for the return and that Image would publish the books.

"Over the years, since we stopped, we've had a lot of really great offers from lots of companies to do 'Stray Bullets' and it just never clicked with us," he said.

"Obviously, (issue) 41 wraps up the things that were going on ... and then, coming to 'Killers,'" there will "some new themes and new ideas that are going to start again," he said, adding he wanted "to start fresh." □

## Bigger Than Bambi



MAUREEN DOWD

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**WASHINGTON** - I started speaking truth to power early.

And my older brothers didn't like it.

They told me that archness in a 10-year-old was not welcome.

I concocted a plan to prove how boring life would be if you were just nice all the time, how much more bracing it is to have sweetness laced with tartness. I told them I would be very, very nice until they asked me to stop, certain that they'd get sick of saccharine and syrupy in short order.

Except they didn't. They liked it. After a week, I'd overdosed on sugar myself and gave up, going back to my old ways of being angelic or devilish, depending on the provocation.

Later, when I fell in love with Jonathan Swift, I felt gratified that I'd kept sardonic, that excellent arrow against oppressors, in the quiver.

So naturally, I'm intrigued with the literary donnybrook over niceness raging on the Internet, a place better known for nastiness.

It flared last month when Isaac Fitzgerald, the first book editor of BuzzFeed, gave an interview to Poynter. Looking for clicks, BuzzFeed, Upworthy and various new websites try to capitalize on the "awesome" rather than the awful.

Fitzgerald, a former biker-bar employee, co-owner of the online site The Rumpus and director of publicity at David Eggers' San Francisco-based literary journal and publishing house, McSweeney's, said he was negative on negative reviews.

"Why waste breath talking smack about something?" he said. "You see it in so many old media-type places, the scathing takedown rip."

Old media? Has this guy ever browsed with his browser?

Fitzgerald said he would follow the "Bambi Rule" espoused by Thumper: "If you can't say something nice, don't say nothing at all."

His plaint echoed one by Heidi Julavits in 2003 in *The Believer*, a magazine founded by Eggers. She wondered if reviews could strive for "loftier service" to the culture and deplored snark as "a reflexive disorder."

Julavits was echoing a 2000 Eggers interview with *The Harvard Advocate*. Replying to a question about selling out, Eggers chided Harvard students: "Do

not be critics, you people, I beg you. I was a critic, and I wish I could take it all back because it came from a smelly and ignorant place in me, and spoke with a voice that was all rage and envy. Do not dismiss a book until you have written one, and do not dismiss a movie until you have made one, and do not dismiss a person until you have met them."

In a wonderful essay on Gawker last week, Tom Scocca excoriated the pompous and often vapid niceness brigade. Snark can be overdone, he wrote, but it is better than smarm, which "is never a force for good. A civilization that speaks in smarm is a civilization that has lost its ability to talk about purposes at all. It is a civilization that says, 'Don't Be Evil,' rather than making sure it does not do evil."

The New Yorker's Malcolm Gladwell tried to riposte in a post called "Being Nice Isn't Really So Awful," but wandered into a silly argument about satire propping up, rather than subverting, the privileged and the status quo.

Leon Wieseltier, the literary editor of *The New Republic*, notes that we label food if we believe it has deleterious consequences and critics are perfectly within their rights to label books in the same way.

"In the very first issue of my magazine, almost 100 years ago," he told me, "Rebecca West established what she called 'the duty of harsh criticism,' and she was right. An intellectual has a solemn obligation to speak out negatively against ideas or books that he or she believes will have a pernicious or misleading effect upon people's understanding of important things. To do otherwise would be cowardly and irresponsible. "If one feels that a value or a belief or a form that one cherishes has been traduced, one should rise to its defense. In intellectual and literary life, where the stakes may be quite high, manners must never be the primary consideration. People who advance controversial notions should be prepared for controversy. Questions of truth, meaning, goodness, justice and beauty are bigger than Bambi. I never thought I'd utter a sentence like this, but I stand with Gawker against BuzzFeed."

Pretending that false and ugly things don't exist is a bit delusional. Yet such prettifying is consistent with a culture dominated by an Internet concerned mainly with marketing techniques.

Not to review books negatively is in essence to subsume book reviewing into advertising, public relations and promotion. Succumbing to uplift, edification and happy talk is basically saying that there's something more important than telling the truth: not making enemies, not hurting people's feelings.

All quarrels are not petty. Sometimes quarrels are about big things, and it's an actual privilege to take a side in them. □



## Why Inequality Still Matters



PAUL KRUGMAN

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Rising inequality isn't a new concern. Oliver Stone's movie "Wall Street," with its portrayal of a rising plutocracy insisting that greed is good, was released in 1987. But politicians, intimidated by cries of "class warfare," have shied away from making a major issue out of the ever-growing gap between the rich and the rest.

That may, however, be changing. We can argue about the significance of Bill de Blasio's victory in the New York mayoral race or of Elizabeth Warren's endorsement of Social Security expansion. And we have yet to see whether President Barack Obama's declaration that inequality is "the defining challenge of our age" will translate into policy changes. Still, the discussion has shifted enough to produce a backlash from pundits arguing that inequality isn't that big a deal.

They're wrong.

The best argument for putting inequality on the back burner is the depressed state of the economy. Isn't it more important to restore economic growth than to worry about how the gains from growth are distributed?

Well, no. First of all, even if you look only at the direct impact of rising inequality on middle-class Americans, it is indeed a very big deal. Beyond that, inequality probably played an important role in creating our economic mess, and has played

a crucial role in our failure to clean it up.

Start with the numbers. On average, Americans remain a lot poorer today than they were before the economic crisis. For the bottom 90 percent of families, this impoverishment reflects both a shrinking economic pie and a declining share of that pie. Which mattered more? The answer, amazingly, is that they're more or less comparable - that is, inequality is rising so fast that over the past six years it has been as big a drag on ordinary American incomes as poor economic performance, even though those years include the worst economic slump since the 1930s.

And if you take a longer perspective, rising inequality becomes by far the most important single factor behind lagging middle-class incomes.

Beyond that, when you try to understand both the Great Recession and the not-so-great recovery that followed, the economic and above all political impacts of inequality loom large.

It's now widely accepted that rising household debt helped set the stage for our economic crisis; this debt surge coincided with rising inequality, and the two are probably related (although the case isn't ironclad). After the crisis struck, the continuing shift of income away from the middle class toward a small elite was a drag on consumer demand, so that inequality is linked to both the economic crisis and the weakness of the recovery that followed.

In my view, however, the really crucial role of inequality in economic calamity has been political.

In the years before the crisis, there was a remarkable bipartisan consensus in Washington in favor of financial deregulation - a consensus justified by neither theory nor history. When crisis struck, there was a rush to rescue the banks. But as soon as

that was done, a new consensus emerged, one that involved turning away from job creation and focusing on the alleged threat from budget deficits.

What do the pre- and postcrisis consensuses have in common? Both were economically destructive: Deregulation helped make the crisis possible, and the premature turn to fiscal austerity has done more than anything else to hobble recovery. Both consensuses, however, corresponded to the interests and prejudices of an economic elite whose political influence had surged along with its wealth.

This is especially clear if we try to understand why Washington, in the midst of a continuing jobs crisis, somehow became obsessed with the supposed need for cuts in Social Security and Medicare. This obsession never made economic sense: In a depressed economy with record low interest rates, the government should be spending more, not less, and an era of mass unemployment is no time to be focusing on potential fiscal problems decades in the future. Nor did the attack on these programs reflect public demands. Surveys of the very wealthy have, however, shown that they - unlike the general public - consider budget deficits a crucial issue and favor big cuts in safety-net programs. And sure enough, those elite priorities took over our policy discourse.

Which brings me to my final point. Underlying some of the backlash against inequality talk, I believe, is the desire of some pundits to depoliticize our economic discourse, to make it technocratic and nonpartisan. But that's a pipe dream. Even on what may look like purely technocratic issues, class and inequality end up shaping - and distorting - the debate.

So the president was right. Inequality is, indeed, the defining challenge of our time. Will we do anything to meet that challenge? □

# Ferrell and McKay: A partnership forged on absurdity

JAKE COYLE  
AP Film Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — To reach the level of absurdity that Will Ferrell and Adam McKay regularly attain, they have to be particularly open-minded. They need to be willing to throw a joke about a female whale's anatomy against the wall, and see if it sticks. It's a process of casual brainstorming, constant rewriting, endless improvisation and audience testing that leads them to ridiculous places. Their "Step Brothers," which McKay calls the most "free-form" film they've

professional crew. It's a night shoot," says Ferrell. "And it all came crashing down on me: We've convinced a bonded company to put these lines on film."

The sequel, "Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues," opening Wednesday, comes nine years after the original, a movie that helped launch a decade of comedies and boosted the careers of Judd Apatow (a producer on "Anchorman"), Paul Rudd and Steve Carell. Since then, Ferrell has starred in every movie McKay has directed,

unprecedented in comedy films," says Apatow, also a producer on the sequel. "It reminds me of Bill Murray and Harold Ramis. When you're around it, you feel how rare it is. They've made five movies and they've all classics." "I like working with them because they remind me I'm supposed to have fun," adds Apatow.

In a recent interview over lunch, McKay and Ferrell reflected on their process of constant trial and continual refinement. It usually begins with tossing around ideas at Ferrell's California guest-

At first, they planned to tour a musical version in theaters before shooting the film. They considered setting a sequel in space ("We never figured out how or why," says Ferrell), or having Ron become friends with Manuel Noriega in Panama. They flirted with the Iranian hostage crisis ("How do we make THAT funny?" says Ferrell), as well as having Burgundy accidentally start a war.

"We'll try anything," says McKay.

Just as "Talladega Nights" hid a commentary on Bush-

McKay at one point considered making the film in two parts, a la "Kill Bill," and even tested part one with an audience. Each joke has at least one alternative, so McKay plans to release a DVD version with the same 400 jokes each swapped out for another.

A tug of war with the Motion Picture Association of America led to some snips, like in the scene when Burgundy smokes crack on the air. They wince a little at losing a big musical scene (it included a song "Gay for a Day"), but say if test audiences don't respond to a scene, they're ruthless in editing.

That's not to say what's in the film isn't plenty outlandish. It includes a section where Burgundy goes blind, a shark named Doby ("Nothing heightens chaos more than a berserk wild animal right in the middle," says McKay), and exclamations like "By the bedpan of Gene Rayburn!"

More than anything, they revel in these unpredictable, nonsensical left-hand turns that break the movie's already high degree of absurdity.

"Nothing is more enjoyable for me than when I'm watching a movie or a TV show and there's that sense that anything can happen," says McKay. "It is the funniest feeling in the world."

Ferrell and McKay, who also run the comedy website Funny Or Die, have both done projects separate of the other, of course. They're currently finalizing plans for a prison comedy, "Get Hard," starring Ferrell and Kevin Hart that McKay will produce.

McKay clearly has some interest in expanding his directing work in other directions, but he also, in the course of the interview, suggests to Ferrell that they do another big character like Burgundy, "like 8 on the volume scale."

"I selfishly want to only work with Adam and have him only work with me," says Ferrell. "Yet at the same time, I want other actors, other people to see. I don't know if people really, truly know how good Adam McKay is." Says McKay: "People always say, 'Are you going to do other movies?' Yeah, eventually. But there's just never been a moment where us doing movies together hasn't been fun as hell and totally satisfying." □



This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Adam McKay, left, and Will Ferrell on the set of "Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues." Ferrell returns to portray newscaster Ron Burgundy in the sequel to "Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy."

(AP Photo/Paramount Pictures, Gemma LaMana)

made, culminated at, of all places, something called the Catalina Wine Mixer, with Ferrell singing Andrea Bocelli's "Por Ti Volare."

"Sometimes I'll say to Ferrell: Can you believe we ended that movie in an opera song?" says McKay.

"We backed ourselves into such a corner," says Ferrell. "It was the only way."

"Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy," the first movie they made together coming out of "Saturday Night Live," famously arrived at Burgundy's inane translation of San Diego as meaning "a whale's vagina." Actually speaking the line caused Ferrell to uncharacteristically unravel. "A pro-

including the NASCAR comedy "Talladega Nights" and the white-collar crime satire "The Other Guys."

Their collaboration, begun in the writing rooms of "SNL," has developed into one of the most rock-solid, long-running partnerships in comedy. They together created the production company Gary Sanchez, choosing the funniest way they could think of for an intern to answer the phone. (I Love Jesus productions was also an option.) They even developed a backstory of Sanchez as a former NFL placekicker from Paraguay who was getting into the movie business.

"They have something that's very special that's almost

house or their Gary Sanchez offices.

"We're big believers in sitting for two, three, four hours," says McKay. "We'll write down 50 ideas, and two will be useable."

The two first found themselves in sync at "SNL," where McKay rose to head writer after just one year as a writer. The first sketch they wrote together was about the deterioration of a morning news show when the teleprompters go down, leading to tribalism.

"Anchorman 2" takes their chauvinist, sexist newsman into the 1980s and the dawn of 24/7 cable news. But it could have taken many different forms.

era red states, the premise of "Anchorman 2" includes a parody of today's media. Burgundy has the epiphany that TV news can tell people not what they need to hear, but what they want to hear — history as shaped by an idiot.

The extensive promotion of the film has included Ferrell, in character, anchoring local news in North Dakota and appearing on ESPN. Ferrell is surprised that some may be missing the satire: "The news itself is kind of blissfully endorsing all the things that we're doing."

More mixing and matching followed in the improvisation-heavy shoot. There were so many jokes that